

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

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By

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PREFACE

THIS book was completed just two weeks before the catastrophic day in March 1939 when the German army marched into Prague and the flag of the Third Reich was hoisted over the palace of the Bohemian kings. Events have outbid the most gloomy prognostications. The gravest criticisms which could be made of the Munich settlement now have the air of superfluous quibbles. Judgments which might have been considered unduly pessimistic are now quaint understatements. The present tense of my account of post-Munich Czecho-Slovakia is no longer valid.

Influenced by the optimism of certain Czech friends and by the Czecho-Slovak economic recovery which surprisingly followed Munich, I began to take a hopeful view of the future; I began to think that perhaps after all Munich had not been a disaster—at least, so far as Czecho-Slovakia was concerned. That hopefulness, particularly in regard to the Slovak question, now appears as self-deception. Yet I have let stand what I wrote before the German annexation, because it has historical interest not only in regard to facts, but also in so far as it reflects the unconquerable resilience of the Czech nation, which recovered from the shock of Munich with a rapidity astonishing to foreign observers.

The actual events of March 1939, the separatist movement fomented in Slovakia by Germany, the campaign of provocation by the German minority, and the German annexation of the Republic are related in a postscript which was written in Prague only a few days after the events described, in an atmosphere of great tension, and in hourly apprehension that I might be disturbed at my work by gentlemen of the Gestapo.

The greater part of the material for this book was obtained by personal investigation and inquiry in Prague

and other parts of Czecho-Slovakia and Central Europe. Apart from information obtained verbally or by personal experience, my chief sources were the Czecho-Slovak newspapers, the publications of the Czecho-Slovak Foreign Office, of the State Statistical Office, and of the Sudeten German Party. For the detailed history of the Sudeten German question before 1938 one book supersedes all others. That is Miss Elizabeth Wiskemann's *Czechs and Germans: a Study of the Struggle in the Historic Provinces of Bohemia and Moravia* (Oxford University Press, 1938). I am indebted to this work for certain details given in the section on the finances of the Sudeten German Party.

In checking dates and other concrete facts I have found the *Bulletin of International News*, published by the Royal Institute of International Affairs, of great assistance. The map of Central Europe and the two maps showing the post-Munich frontiers are reproduced from this *Bulletin* with the permission of the Institute.

It has seemed advisable to use the form Czechoslovakia, formerly current, in dealing with events prior to the execution of the Munich Agreement—that is, in Chapters I to XI. Elsewhere the new hyphenated form has been adopted.

To prevent misconceptions I should point out that, although in addition to representing *The Daily Herald* in Prague I was also editorially responsible for a news service owned by the Czecho-Slovak Government, none of the opinions expressed in this book are to be taken as being official or even semi-official Czecho-Slovak opinion. Neither the Czecho-Slovak Government nor any of its officials bear any responsibility for this book or for its contents.

At the same time I should like to record my gratitude to many Czecho-Slovak friends, some in high official position, others on the staffs of the Prague newspapers and news agencies, or engaged in business and finance, who have given me their hospitality and many hours of their time in order that I might the better get to know the life of their country.

A. H.

CONTENTS

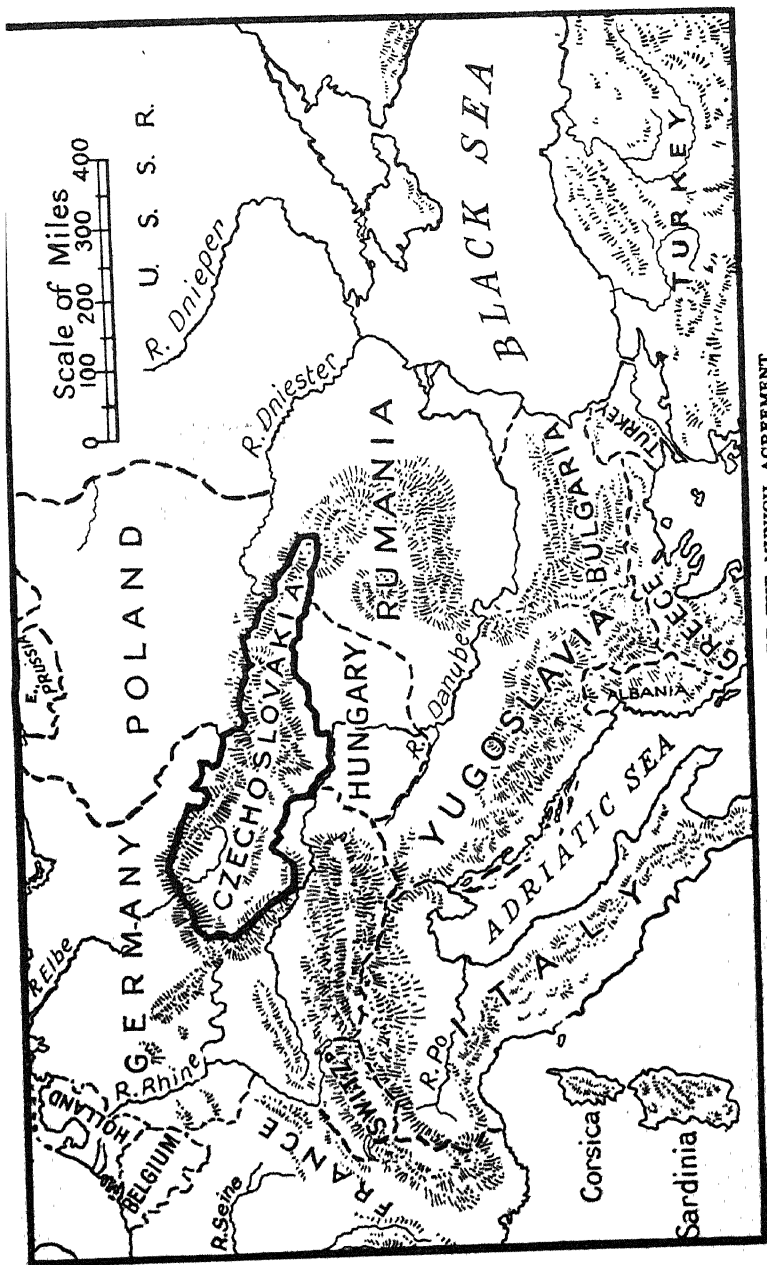
CHAPTER	PAGE
PROLOGUE	I I
I. WHY IT MATTERS	14
II. AFTER AUSTRIA	20
(i) The Effect of the <i>Anschluss</i> on Czechoslovakia's Defensive Position	
(ii) The <i>Anschluss</i> and the Sudeten Germans	
(iii) "The Karlsbad Programme"	
III. A DEMOCRACY DEFENDS ITSELF	42
(i) The Sudeten Germans after Karlsbad	
(ii) The Sudeten Cause in International Relations	
(iii) Britain, France, and Czechoslovakia	
(iv) May 21, 1938	
IV. NAZI PROPAGANDA METHODS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA	73
V. THE ORGANIZATION OF DISORDER	98
(i) Henlein's Storm Troops	
(ii) Sudeten German Party Finance	
VI. THE GERMAN PLAN	116
(i) The War Preparations in Germany	
(ii) The S.d.P. Memorandum	
(iii) The Czech Proposals and the German Plan	
VII. THE RUNCIMAN PLAN	141
(i) The Way of a Mediator	
(ii) The Real Purpose	
(iii) Czechoslovak Offers and Henleinist Obstruction	
VIII. THE HENLEINIST "PUTSCH"	174
(i) The Fighting in the Sudeten Country	
(ii) Lord Runciman's Last Effort	
(iii) The Berchtesgaden Meeting	
(iv) An Alternative to Henlein	

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

CHAPTER	PAGE
IX. THE ANGLO-FRENCH SURRENDER	196
(i) The Ultimatum to President Beneš	
(ii) The Fall of the Hodža Government	
X. CZECHOSLOVAKIA PREPARES FOR WAR	214
(i) Central Europe between Peace and War	
(ii) "Without Them and Against Them"	
XI. THE PEACE IN PRACTICE	233
(i) The German Occupation	
(ii) Poland Grabs her Share	
(iii) Czechoslovakia's War with Hungary	
XII. CZECHOSLOVAKIA BECOMES CZECHO-SLOVAKIA	256
(i) The Political Structure :	
(a) The Czechs	
(b) The Slovaks	
(c) Carpatho-Ukraine and the Ukrainian Movement	
(ii) The New Men :	
(a) President Emil Hácha	
(b) Prime Minister Rudolf Beran	
(c) Foreign Minister František Chvalkovský	
(d) Mgr. Josef Tiso, Premier of Slovakia	
(e) Mgr. Augustyn Vološin, Premier of Carpatho-Ukraine	
(iii) The Economic Position To-day	
EPILOGUE	297
POSTSCRIPT : "TEMPORARY EXTINGUISHMENT"	301
APPENDIX I : THE S.D.P. MEMORANDUM	325
APPENDIX II : THE FOURTH PLAN	327
INDEX	329

MAPS

CENTRAL EUROPE BEFORE THE MUNICH AGREEMENT	9
TERRITORY CEDED TO GERMANY AND POLAND	237
A DECISION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION IN BERLIN	241
TERRITORY CEDED TO HUNGARY	251



CENTRAL EUROPE BEFORE THE MUNICH AGREEMENT

PROLOGUE

THE windows of my flat in Prague look out over a football stadium to the Gothic spires of the fourteenth-century cathedral of St Vitus and the long, many-windowed walls of the Hrad, castle of the ancient Bohemian kings and residence of the President of Czecho-Slovakia.

On the night of September 21, 1938, date of the Franco-British betrayal of Czecho-Slovakia—the most bitter date in Czecho-Slovak history for over three hundred years—thousand after thousand of the people of Prague marched past my window to the Hrad. They marched in orderly ranks, stretching from edge to edge of a wide avenue. Gravely and dourly the dense mass of men and women, boys and girls, moved slowly along the road, a string of empty trams, golden in the darkness, trailing helplessly behind.

As the crowds marched they shouted and chanted in unison. They shouted slogans and rhyming couplets. I thought at first that what they were saying would be “Down with England and France!” or “Down with Germany!” But it was not that at all. I went out on to the balcony as they came abreast of my house, and I caught the chanted refrain, “*Byli jsme za Rakouska!*” (“We were here before Austria!”)

That was what the crowd was chanting. Not some catchword of the day, but the famous saying of the nineteenth-century Czecho-Slovak historian, František Palacký: “We were here before Austria, and we shall be after it.”

The view from my window of the football stadium and the Gothic cathedral, the demonstrators using an historian’s saying as their slogan—these things, in their simultaneous union of the historic past and the contemporary world, are symbolic of Czecho-Slovakia. Eager for every latest development of modern science and art, for modern fashions

and ways, the Czecho-Slovaks nevertheless live in their past, and their past lives in the present. The ancestors of the present-day Czecho-Slovaks are St Wenceslas of the tenth century, John Huss, the Protestant Reformer, and Professor T. G. Masaryk, the President-Liberator who died in September 1937. There are many other notable figures in Czecho-Slovak tradition, but these three are outstanding, and for the educated Czecho-Slovak of to-day there is one continuous line of thought and feeling from the tenth century to the twentieth. Even the mass of the people, simple peasants and workmen, are conscious of this tradition. St Wenceslas is for them no mere fairy-tale figure in a pretty Christmas carol ; he is a symbol of the nation. There was proof of this on St Wenceslas's Day on September 28, 1938, which came in the week following the general mobilization. On that day the base of the statue of St Wenceslas, in the Wenceslas Square of Prague, was gradually buried beneath a mound of flowers—simple bunches of asters and Michaelmas daisies from window-boxes and suburban gardens, and splendid wreaths from corporations and societies.

Yet another symbol of the simultaneity in Czecho-Slovak life of the mediæval and the modern is given by the view from the Bridge of the Legions—the bridge named after the Legionaries, the Czecho-Slovak soldiers who escaped from the Austrian army and fought on the side of the Allies in Russia, France, and Italy. If you cross this bridge over the grey, grimy waters of the Vltava from the National Theatre to the river's left bank you see on the right hand the mediæval Charles Bridge, with its narrow arches and statues, and above it, on the hill, the long façade of the Hrad. To the left you look upstream to the smoking chimneys of industrial Smichov. The view to the right belongs to the Gothic world of old Paris, of Strasbourg, or Cologne ; that to the left belongs to Liverpool, Essen, or Pittsburgh.

To understand Czecho-Slovakia it is essential to keep in mind this fact : Czecho-Slovakia was not a new-fangled creation of the Treaty of Versailles, but the re-emergence to full statehood of an ancient nation which in the past had disposed of territories as great as any it has had since the

PROLOGUE

War. Czecho-Slovakia had the misfortune to be submerged inside the Austro-Hungarian Empire for nearly three hundred years, but the Czecho-Slovak people remained and gave proof enough of their vitality during the War and in the post-War years. Similarly, to-day, when Czecho-Slovakia again faces submergence beneath a Germanic drive to the East, it is safe to prophesy that the brave Czecho-Slovak people will not disappear. *We were here before Austria, and we shall be after it.*

I dedicate this book to the people of Czecho-Slovakia.

CHAPTER I

WHY IT MATTERS

ON September 30, 1938, Great Britain, France, and Italy assisted their former enemy of the Great War, Germany, to conquer their former ally, Czechoslovakia. The Peace Treaty of Versailles was countermanded by the 'peace treaty' of Munich. Schemes of dominion which in 1914 had been judged so menacing as to demand suppression even at the cost of four years' war were acquiesced in after a nine days' crisis. At Versailles Germany had submitted, after a hard fight, to the terms of her foes. At Munich Czechoslovakia was forced to submit, without a fight, to terms dictated by her friends. It is doubtful if the whole of history can show a parallel to this extraordinary conquest and this extraordinary peace, and it is not surprising if the people of Britain and France, completely bewildered by the circumstances of the conquest, were content simply to welcome the peace.

The realization that the Munich peace was not likely to be of lasting duration followed, however, quickly upon the acclamations accorded the peace-makers. One of them, Mr Neville Chamberlain, came back to London to say: "Let no one think that because we have signed this agreement between these Four Powers at Munich we can afford to relax our efforts in regard to that programme [of rearmament] at this moment."

Mr Chamberlain went on to declare that the position was, in fact, just the contrary. Peace had been made, but it was necessary to prepare with even greater energy for war. What then was the actual value of the Munich Agreement? The most favourable answer possible to that question was given by Mr Chamberlain on October 4: "We have only laid the foundations of peace. The superstructure is not even begun."

WHY IT MATTERS

There are many millions of people in Britain and all over the world who believe that the foundations to which Mr Chamberlain referred will never bear the weight of a superstructure, who question whether, indeed, they are foundations at all. To many these alleged foundations seem nothing more than the most trumpery fake. Whether or not Mr Chamberlain is right will be proved within the next few months. In any case, the whole future of Europe is from now on conditioned by the decisions reached at Munich. Peace was secured on September 30, said the Prime Minister, or alternatively, in the words of Major Attlee, there was "an armistice in a state of war." No one doubts that in principle peace, or even an armistice, is preferable to war. But neither the Munich Agreement itself nor any explanation given by the Governments of the Great Powers answered the two vital questions which must be asked about the Czechoslovak settlement.

These questions are : (1) How was it that a situation was allowed to develop from which the only way out was either war or the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia ? (2) What is the *character* of the ' peace ' under which Europe will now live ?

The answers to these two questions cover between them the causes and the effects of the Czechoslovak crisis. To understand that crisis is, further, to understand the basic problems of European politics, of the relations between the Great Powers. Czechoslovakia in 1938 was like a litmus paper that revealed in a flash the true nature of the European balance of power. It showed where strength and weakness really lay, and exposed the hollowness of many widespread assumptions about that balance.

In September 1938 Germany conquered Czechoslovakia, not by war, but by the threat of war supported by powerful allies. Germany's allies were the treachery of France and the connivance in that treachery of Great Britain. By that conquest Germany obtained possession of the most important strategic frontier in Europe, and additions of territory, population, and economic resources which brought her an immediate vast increase of military strength, together with

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

an almost limitless prospect of more to come. At the same time Germany obtained an alteration in the political arrangement of Europe of a magnitude which is commonly only secured by war.

Before telling the dramatic and tragic story of the defeat of Czechoslovakia, or outlining the ultimate consequences of that defeat, let us first summarize Germany's immediate material gains under the Munich Agreement :

1. *The Frontiers.* Germany herself now possesses the only frontier which could have barred her expansion over the whole of South-eastern Europe, together with the fortifications which made this frontier one of the best defended in Europe.

2. *Territorial Gains.* Germany has acquired additional territory amounting to approximately 30,000 square kilometres, or nearly as much as the area of Belgium.

3. *Population.* Germany has acquired additional population totalling approximately 3,600,000, or more than half as much as the population of Austria.

4. *Economic Resources.* Germany has acquired coal, copper, china clay, radium, timber, and other raw material resources of immense value—the exact total of which it is impossible to estimate.

5. *Industries.* Germany has acquired metal, glass, porcelain, textile, paper, chemical, leather, and other industries, many of them with sound positions in the export market selling to America, Britain, and other countries without currency restrictions. The foreign currency which these industries had hitherto brought into Czechoslovakia will henceforth go to Germany.

This is merely a brief outline of the material booty which France and Britain helped Germany to secure. Even so summary a statement shows that Germany's gains are such as would have been worth, from her point of view, at least a short war. Obtained without war, Germany's conquest is doubly succulent. Further, this summary takes no account of the more complicated, but even more valuable gains, such as the control which Germany is already exercising over the politics, industry, agriculture, and commerce of

the diminished Czechoslovak Republic. Yet even this mere outline is sufficient to show how great are the additions to her strength which Germany has obtained. As regards the political, strategic, and economic results of the German conquest of Czechoslovakia which are external to the Republic, it is difficult to say what limit can be set to their importance for Hitler's Reich. Summing up these international consequences of the Munich Agreement we may say that Germany has obtained the following :

1. The destruction of the French system of alliances intended to protect France against German aggression by means of the defensive triangle, France—Czechoslovakia—Russia. Through the destruction of this system France has lost 1,500,000 well-armed soldiers and 2000 aeroplanes placed behind a fortified frontier in Germany's rear.

2. The isolation of the U.S.S.R. from Western Europe by severance of the connecting link—Czechoslovakia—and, conversely, the relegation to the western edge of the Continent of France and Britain.

3. The possession of the key position which will enable Germany completely to control Central, South-eastern, and Eastern Europe—with the exception of Russia—during the next two or three years.

4. The foundation of such a basis in Europe as will, once consolidated, enable Germany to exact complete satisfaction of her colonial demands from France and Britain.

These, in brief, are the results of the 'peace' which Mr Neville Chamberlain and M. Daladier brought home from Munich to the cheering multitudes of Frenchmen and Englishmen on October 1, 1938. No observer of developments in Central Europe during the summer and autumn of 1938 can question the menace to the British and French empires of the German triumph in Czechoslovakia.

No attempt is made here to argue for or against the existence of capitalist imperialisms, nor whether one imperialism is better than another. It is assumed that ruling British and French opinion desires the continued existence of Britain and France as World Powers, and that ruling German opinion desires the creation of a German

empire. That these ambitions will sooner or later lead to war cannot be gainsaid ; the conflict has already begun. World war can only be averted, as it was last year, by the repeated yielding of one side or the other. That the side to surrender will not be Germany has already been made plain enough. That Britain and France will carry their submissiveness so far as to commit national and imperial suicide is hard to believe. The final outcome must consequently be a war in which one side has already lost vital strategic, political, and moral positions by a policy of attempting to buy off the enemy with other nations' property. As soon as that property is exhausted the turn will come of those who so freely gave it away. This moment cannot now be longed delayed. When it arrives those who were despoiled to stave off an aggressor will themselves join the aggressor and despoil their despoilers.

It is a mistake to suppose that the smaller nations of Central and Eastern Europe will for their own sakes fight against German domination. At the price of giving up a certain liberty of thought and action, which, except in Czechoslovakia, has never been very great, the smaller countries can make reasonably sure of being comfortably off, if not prosperous, through connexion with Germany. This is what will now happen. Czechoslovakia's political, economic, and strategic position was unique in that it was the key to the rest of Central and Eastern Europe. A dozen authorities could be cited on this point. Let us take only the latest—Elizabeth Wiskemann :

The more one examines the Czech-German problem the more evident it becomes that there is no very clear distinction to be made between the cession of the mainly German territories of Czechoslovakia to Germany and the complete domination of Central Europe—Czech-speaking territory included—by the Germans.

The cession of the mainly German territory has been made ; there is not the slightest doubt that the complete domination of Central Europe will now follow. In accordance with Nazi plans, a German empire stretching from the North Sea to the Black Sea will be rapidly created, against which

WHY IT MATTERS

Britain and France would, in the event of war, be helpless. By abandoning Czechoslovakia France and Britain have lost the one point in Europe at which opposition to Germany was possible. It may be that the British and French Conservative statesmen do not wish to oppose Germany, that they are prepared, when the demand comes, to hand over the whole of their countries' colonial possessions. It may be so, but the building of more and more warships and aeroplanes, the endeavour to recruit yet larger armies, do not seem like expressions of non-resistance. In fact, no one now pretends that a war of imperialisms can be long avoided. By the abandonment of Czechoslovakia a brief respite was gained. But with it was lost not only an economic, political, strategic, and military position, but also moral ground, a basis injustice, of the highest consequence. This retreat, this defeat, and this betrayal will affect the history of Europe and the lives of every man, woman, and child in Europe for decades to come.

CHAPTER II

AFTER AUSTRIA

(i) THE EFFECT OF THE "ANSCHLUSS" ON CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S DEFENSIVE POSITION

Two years separated the German reoccupation of the Rhineland and the German annexation of Austria; only six months came between the *Anschluss* and the partition of Czechoslovakia. It is hardly too much to say that the terms of the Munich Agreement were really fixed on the day the German army marched into Vienna. Six years ago Professor Ewald Banse, the German military theoretician, wrote: "If success be achieved in uniting Austria with Germany the collapse of Czechoslovakia will follow."¹ The professor has been proved correct. Under the conditions of Central European politics in 1938 only one thing could have given the lie to Professor Banse, only one thing could have prevented the collapse of Czechoslovakia. It could have been prevented if Britain and France had shown as great a readiness, and ability, to engage in war as Germany did. What finally forced the Czechs to capitulate was the evidence that Poland and Hungary would march with Germany. These two states, anxious only to be on the winning side, would just as readily have remained neutral had it been plain that Germany was faced with united Anglo-French opposition. What appears to have made the British and French Governments extremely reluctant to oppose Germany with force was the worsening of Czechoslovakia's defensive position caused by the German annexation of Austria. Whether or not the gravity of the Czechoslovak position was overestimated in London and Paris can now never be known. The Czechs themselves did

¹ Ewald Banse, *Raum und Volk im Weltkriege* (1932); cited by Emanuel Moravec, *The Military Importance of Czechoslovakia in Europe* (Orbis, Prague, 1938).

not take so gloomy a view as did the Western Powers. Here we can only give some of the considerations of both sides, the pessimistic and the optimistic. A vivid statement of the pessimistic point of view was that of Mr Winston Churchill in the House of Commons on March 14 :

This mastery of Vienna gives to Nazi Germany military and economic control of the whole of the communications of South-eastern Europe, by road, by river, and by rail. . . . Czechoslovakia is at this moment isolated, both in the economic and in the military sense. Her trade outlet through Hamburg, which is based upon the Peace Treaty, can, of course, be closed at any moment. Now her communications by rail and river to the south, and after the south to the south-east, are liable to be severed at any moment. Her trade may be subjected to tolls of a destructive character—of an absolutely strangling character. . . . The economic life of this small State may be very largely strangled as a result of the act of violence which was perpetrated last Friday night. A wedge has been driven into the heart of what is called the Little Entente. . . . By what has happened it is not too much to say that Nazi Germany in its present mood, if matters are left as they are, is in a position to dominate the whole of South-east Europe.

The immediate unwelcome result of the *Anschluss* was the extension of Czechoslovakia's already long frontier with Germany by another 240 miles. That meant an unavoidable dilution of the man-power available for defending the northern and western frontiers. Determined, however, to make the best of a bad business, the Czechs at once set about strengthening the fortifications along the frontiers with Austria.

There had for some time been light defences along this frontier—mostly in the shape of machine-gun nests—and now it was decided to raise the defences to what the Czechs called 'first-line strength.' According to information given me by a high Government official, 30,000 men were rushed down to the Austrian border to work on the fortifications. It was considered that the necessary improvements could be completed within a year. The Czechs at that time reckoned that they probably had still about a year's grace before Germany began the war.

Shortly after the German seizure of Austria the British Legation in Prague pointed out to the Czechoslovak army authorities that it was unfortunate for Czechoslovakia that the frontier with Austria was undefended. To this, so I was told, the Czechoslovak reply was that, on the contrary, they had always reckoned with a German invasion of Austria in the event of war against Czechoslovakia, and that consequently the frontier had been fortified for some time past. So far as they were concerned, the disappearance of Austria had simply come before the war instead of during its early stages. "It is hardly a compliment to your British Intelligence Service that you did not know about our defences against Austria!" said one Foreign Office official to me.

In fact, however, the Czechs had somewhat flattered themselves about the fortifications on the Austrian border. These had been very slight indeed. If they had been really serviceable it is clear that it would not have been necessary to set 30,000 men to work improving them.

The official British view was critical of Czechoslovak defences as a whole. In the summer of 1938 the British Military Attaché in Prague reported to the effect that the value of the fortifications in Bohemia had been overrated.

The difficulties resulting from the *Anschluss* were fully recognized by the leading Czech military expert, Colonel Emanuel Moravec, Professor at the Czechoslovak Military Academy :

The position of Czechoslovakia as a military power has become more difficult by the fact that it now has the German army on its south flank and on the frontiers of Slovakia. . . . Vienna, as the greatest centre of Central European communications, has now fallen into the hands of Germany, which has thus secured an outstanding and central basis of operations. . . .¹

A representative of the more optimistic outlook was Hubert Ripka, the well-known Czech publicist, who wrote in June 1938 that the position of Czechoslovakia was certainly rendered more difficult by the annexation of Austria,

¹ Emanuel Moravec, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-56.

AFTER AUSTRIA

... but the *Anschluss* does not in itself constitute a menace to the foundations of her independence. President Masaryk and Dr Beneš, even during the War, reckoned with a possible union of Germany and Austria, but continued to struggle for Czechoslovak independence, because they were convinced that it could be upheld even if that union were achieved.¹

Two things encouraged Czech optimism: one was the knowledge that the German generals themselves had a high opinion of Czechoslovakia's defences, and of the quality of the Czech army; and the other—faith in the alliance with France.

To the Czechs it was gratifying to know that Germany, in marching into Austria, had actually been afraid of Czechoslovak intervention. On March 10 and 11 there were rumours in Germany and in Czechoslovakia of a Czechoslovak mobilization. The Germans asked several times, through their Minister in Prague, if there was any truth in these reports. Naturally there was none. Czechoslovakia could not mobilize or take any other action to prevent Germany seizing Austria—a state with which it had no alliance, and which had, in any case, already been abandoned by its one-time protector, Italy.

If German military might was all that it was believed to be in Britain then the generals who directed operations in Austria should have had no cause to fear Czechoslovak intervention, even if it had taken place—and there was not the slightest likelihood that it would. Nevertheless, German uneasiness continued. One reason undoubtedly was the knowledge that a good third of the Austrian population was opposed to the Nazi conquest. Czechoslovak intervention would have given the anti-Nazis their chance. Finally, as evidence of Czechoslovakia's intention to keep out, the Czechoslovaks agreed not to strengthen their garrisons in the border districts. This was supposed to be in return for the German undertaking to keep the Reich troops at least ten miles away from the frontier.

The Czechs were aware also of such judgments as that

¹ Hubert Ripka, "Czechoslovakia—the Key to the Danubian Basin," in *The Slavonic Review*, vol. xvii, No. 49 (July 1938).

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

of the German military writer "Markomannus," in his book *Brennpunkt Böhmen* :

Czechoslovakia, in the event of war, is for Germany such a danger that it would be the best solution if Bohemia could be cracked like a large nut by pincers. But the centre of the nut is the tough Czech nation, which has a large army equipped with modern weapons.¹

To know that one's potential enemy has such a respect for one's prowess is always cheering.

The second thing that encouraged optimism was the alliances with France and the U.S.S.R., and the friendship with Britain. It was undoubtedly worrying that when the annexation of Austria took place France was going through one of her endemic Cabinet crises. But on March 13 a Government was formed, and the next day M. Léon Blum, the Premier, and M. Paul Boncour, the Foreign Minister, told M. Osusky, the Czechoslovak Minister in Paris, that his country could rely absolutely on France's previous assurances that she would help Czechoslovakia if she were attacked.

Outwardly, at least, both officials and the general public in Czechoslovakia seemed calm throughout the Austrian crisis. The Czechoslovak Government was not, perhaps, greatly impressed by Field-Marshal Goering's assurances on March 11 and 12 that the occupation of Austria was in no way directed against Czechoslovakia. It was true that the Field-Marshal had also given "a general assurance to the Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin—an assurance which he expressly renewed later on behalf of Herr Hitler—that it would be the earnest endeavour of the German Government to improve German-Czech relations."² But the question was, on whose terms were relations to be improved? In the light of what has since happened it is difficult not to think that Field-Marshal Goering was indulging his capacity for sardonic humour when he made that statement.

¹ Cited by Hubert Ripka, *op. cit.*

² Mr Chamberlain in the House of Commons, March 14, 1938.

AFTER AUSTRIA

Similarly, no Czech could sincerely echo Lord Halifax's statement of March 16: "By these assurances, solemnly given and more than once repeated, we naturally expect the German Government to abide."

One factor which helped the Czechs to maintain their composure was no doubt the realization that in the last resort the question of peace or war did not depend on them, but on the Great Powers. Thus there was room for a certain degree of fatalism. In any case, in March the Czechoslovak Government, like the rest of the world, still believed that, should the worst come to the worst, then France and Russia and Great Britain too would be there to help them out. For example, on March 28 Prime Minister Hodža, in a broadcast to the nation, expressed great satisfaction at the speech made by Mr Neville Chamberlain on March 24 in the House of Commons. This was the speech which became the standard statement of British policy. In it Mr Chamberlain made the oft-quoted, if elusive, declaration that

where peace and war are concerned legal obligations are not alone involved, and if war broke out it would be unlikely to be confined to those who have assumed such obligations. . . . It would be well within the bounds of probability that other countries besides those which were parties to the original dispute would almost immediately become involved. This is especially true of two countries—Great Britain and France.

Mr Chamberlain's speech was interpreted by Dr Hodža as showing that Britain had strengthened her interest in Central Europe, and that therefore the security of Czechoslovakia had been strengthened. The speech, he said, "was a great deed for the consolidation of Europe."

At the same time the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in Germany considered that it showed that the absence of justice in Czechoslovakia was now understood in London, and that Mr Chamberlain had made an unmistakable appeal to the Czechoslovak Government.

Until the last moment Czechoslovak Ministers professed the greatest faith in Great Britain. That faith looked silly

afterwards, but there was an excuse for the error. After all, Mr Chamberlain did say in the House of Commons on March 7, "For the preservation of democracy, which means the preservation of our liberty, I myself would fight. . . ."

(ii) THE "ANSCHLUSS" AND THE SUDETEN GERMANS

From the Czechoslovak Government's point of view the most unfortunate result of the *Anschluss* was the immediate deterioration of relations with the Sudeten Germans of the Republic.

The battalions of Reichswehr marching through the streets of Vienna, the arrival there of Herr Himmler, the Reich Police Chief, with his squad of Gestapo experts, Hitler acknowledging the "*Sieg Heil!*" of thousands of Viennese—all this happening only thirty miles from the Czechoslovak frontier immediately had a convulsive effect upon the Germans of Czechoslovakia. In the Sudetenland there was hardly a Henlein party man but was certain that Hitler would be in Prague within a week at the latest. People went about whispering to each other, "He's coming to-morrow!" or "Next Sunday is the day!" The terrorization of the non-Henleinists and of the Czechs in the German-speaking areas became fiercer than ever before. Life was made a misery for every Social Democrat or Communist German, and exceedingly unpleasant for Jews, Czechs, and, in brief, anyone who did not belong to the Henlein party.

The triumph of the "Big H"—Hitler—in Austria jerked new life into the Sudeten German Party of the "Little H"—Konrad Henlein. In January Henlein had been losing ground, and in February there had come a split in the party and the formation of a new group called the "German Socialist Party." The *Anschluss* effectively showed the malcontents that National-Socialism could still produce a trump card. Sudeten German Party deputies in the Prague Chamber displayed aggressive glee at Hitler's victory. "The Germans in Czechoslovakia," said one, "rejoice at the union of Austria with Germany from the bottom

of their hearts." The Austrian crisis was taken as an opportunity for reiterating the Henlein party's demands. On March 15 one deputy said, "We most solemnly declare that we have decided to fight together for our political rights, cultural freedom, and economic and social security." No one in the Czechoslovak Government had any intention or desire to deny these things to the Sudeten Germans. Indeed, the mere fact that they had forty-four deputies in the Chamber showed the extent of their political rights. What the Government was much more concerned about was the matters which were less often discussed by Sudeten German Party leaders, but which, as every one knew, were none the less at the back of their minds—matters, moreover, which were in the very forefront of the minds of Henlein's masters in Berlin and Berchtesgaden. These matters were Nazi plans for the reconstruction of Czechoslovak internal and foreign policy. The cat was let out of the bag four days after the *Anschluss*, when a Sudeten German Party senator informed the Czechoslovak Senate that his party was only prepared to co-operate with the Government if it remodelled the structure of the state on the Swiss pattern, and if, like Switzerland or Belgium, it adopted a completely neutral foreign policy. Why a country's foreign policy should be directed to suit the wishes of a minority, however noisy, was not made clear. What was perfectly clear was that this Sudeten German objection to Czechoslovakia's foreign policy was strikingly similar to Reich German objections. The Henlein party deputies and senators were supported by a nicely co-ordinated campaign in the Reich German Press, which said, for example :

Only with difficulty can Germany accept the fact that Prague is a link in the Soviet agreements with which the foreign policy of Litvinoff and M. Barthou's hatred of Germany have tried to weld an iron ring round Germanic Central Europe.¹

This line of thought culminated in the ponderous insolence of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, which said that, so far as Czechoslovakia was concerned, the question was not one

¹ *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, March 15, 1938.

of protecting the country from attack. Not at all. The true problem was : what must the Czechoslovak Government do to diminish or remove the danger in which it stood as the result of an improper policy of enmity towards Germany ? This was like saying that resistance to threats of robbery with violence is " an improper policy of enmity " towards the would-be robber. It was gangster morality applied to international politics : " Pay me ' protection money ' or I'll bust up your shop ! "

The German conquest of Austria which filled the Henlein party with new enthusiasm filled the other German parties of Czechoslovakia with panic. The German Farmers Party, which had five seats in the Chamber and a Minister in the Government, announced four days after the *Anschluss* that it could no longer co-operate with the Government parties. Evasively, the party said that this did not mean it would join the Opposition—*i.e.*, the Henlein party—though at the same time it rejoiced at the union of Germany and Austria. From this the Czechoslovaks rightly deduced that the path from leaving the Government to joining the Opposition would not be a long one. It was not. The journey, indeed, took precisely five days. On March 22 Dr Franz Spina, the German Farmers Party Minister without Portfolio, resigned, and the party was absorbed into the Sudeten German Party ranks.

The panic flight among the German parties continued. The next day the German Small Traders, the party of the shopkeepers, joined Henlein. On the same day the German Christian Socialists—the Catholic party—decided that it would have to be in the swim and join the Henleinists. Accordingly its representative in the Cabinet, Dr Zajiček, resigned. On March 25 even the German Social Democrats, with eleven deputies, the next biggest German party after Henlein's, decided that it would have to withdraw its representative in the Government, Dr Ludwig Czech, Minister of Public Health. Though thus giving up actual participation in the Government, the Social Democrats declared that they would continue to give it support. They could hardly do otherwise. Whatever their national feelings

might be, as the only German Socialist party left in Europe, they could not join the Henleinists, who were Nazis in all but name. The position of the German Social Democrats was then, and remained so until the final crisis, the most difficult of any party or group in Czechoslovakia.

As a result of the flight to Hitlerism Henlein's party became the biggest party in the country. It increased its Parliamentary strength from forty-four to fifty-five deputies and from twenty-three to twenty-six senators. It was considerably bigger now than the biggest single Czechoslovak party—that of the Agrarians, which had forty-five deputies and twenty-three senators.

The Sudetens were now cock-a-hoop. On March 16 Henlein had issued a manifesto demanding that all Germans in Czechoslovakia, whatever their political opinions, should join his party. New members would be admitted until May 31. An intensive propaganda campaign was set going. "Be on the winning side! Join Henlein before it is too late!" party members whispered to their non-member acquaintances. "It is five minutes to twelve!" became the menacing party slogan. In Reichenberg, Eger, Asch, and every other Sudeten German town appeared posters portraying the hands of a clock and the urgent summons to join up.

On March 25 Henlein demanded a general election and elections to local government bodies. These, he said, would show Europe how things really were. At the same time he made the sinister announcement that German Social Democrats were no longer regarded as Germans. They could not be considered as members of the "German race group." There was an unpleasantly familiar ring about this statement: it recalled only too closely numerous announcements in Berlin that German Socialists, Communists, Liberals, Pacifists, and Democrats were not really Germans.

It might be thought that this exclusion of the Social Democrats went contrary to the previous appeal for new members of the Sudeten German Party, irrespective of political views. In fact, it did not. The Social Democrats

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

were not prevented from joining the Henlein ranks on account of their opinions. Not at all. They were excluded because they were not German ! In fact, of course, none of the German Social Democrats had any desire to link up with the Sudeten Party. Throughout they remained steadily loyal to their own party and to the Czechoslovak Republic.

The Henleinist propaganda campaign went on. Meetings were held all over North and West Bohemia. Dr Neuwirth, one of the party's leaders, demanded on March 27 that the German districts should be administered solely by Germans. Since the obvious Czechoslovak rejoinder was, "Once in German hands, how long would these districts remain in Czechoslovakia ? " Dr Neuwirth was at pains to insist on the loyalty of the Sudeten German Party. Henlein, he said, had declared emphatically that the Sudeten Germans respected the country's territorial integrity. "We want to show the world," he went on, "that once we have said a thing we mean it—within the limits of honour and dignity that belong to our national group."

The last phrase was interesting. The limits of honour and dignity were ultimately not very far reaching.

The Government took various steps to counter the new agitational drive among the Sudeten Germans. It sought to take the wind out of Nazi propaganda sails by removing grievances and showing that it could be just, as well as determined. To begin with the Government declared on March 19 that it would put into force by decree, at once, instead of gradually, the agreement made with the non-Henlein German parties on February 18, 1937. This agreement promised to increase the number of Germans appointed to official jobs, and during the year which had passed there had been a slow but steady movement to make amends for past discrimination against the Germans. Now this development was to be speeded up.

Then on the 28th Dr Hodža, in his broadcast, announced the plan for the "Nationalities Statute," which afterwards became the basis of the negotiations that went on throughout the summer. The statute was to consolidate all existing

AFTER AUSTRIA

aws and measures relating to the minorities and establish their position in the country definitively.

Dr Hodža said :

We are entering a new phase of our minority policy. There will be no denationalization either of Germans, Hungarians, Russians, or Poles, nor of Czechs or Slovaks. All Czechoslovak citizens are protected by the State and the Government, wherever they may live in the Republic. The Government will not permit of any form of pressure, whether economic, moral, or political.

It is now time to concentrate into one systematic whole, by a legislative act, all existing minority measures. We are entitled to say that in Czechoslovakia we have formed a relatively perfect system of minority laws. The fact that so far we have not made a clarified system of them may give rise to a false impression that our minorities cannot breathe freely in the State. Therefore the Czechoslovak Government is considering a minority statute.

Neither the action taken for the increased employment of Germans in official service nor the "Nationalities Statute" plan had much effect on the German and other minorities. The agreement of February 1937 had from the beginning been rejected by Henlein as hopelessly inadequate, and the Government's new decision made no impression whatever on him now. The plan for a "Nationalities Statute" appeared merely to increase minority intransigence.

The 700,000 Hungarians and the 80,000 Poles hurried to follow the lead of the Sudeten German Party in lodging claims for autonomy. The Henlein party became more aggressive than ever, and kept on demanding new elections, both municipal and Parliamentary. The Press of Germany, as usual, ran a nicely co-ordinated campaign against the Czechoslovak Government, and in support of the Sudeten German Party : Dr Hodža's speech was useless ; Czechoslovakia as a nation was a "fiction" ; it owed its existence only to the goodwill of the Versailles Treaty signatories ; Czechoslovakia's right to exist was seriously questioned ; the Czechoslovak Government's only policy was to starve the Sudeten Germans. All this was said over and over again in every newspaper of the Third Reich.

The state of excitement produced among the Germans in Czechoslovakia was such that the Government on the last day of March banned political meetings for a month. The measure, undemocratic though it was felt to be by many Czechoslovaks, was regarded as necessary in order to prevent the many fights and disorders among political opponents which would almost certainly have occurred.

The ban on public meetings certainly eased the tension in the Sudeten areas, and the first part of April was comparatively quiet. The Sudeten German Party, however, showed no more readiness to become reasonable than before. On April 6 it announced that as far as it could see Czechoslovak public opinion had not changed, and, therefore, it saw no reason to change its policy. The next day the Henleinist deputies ostentatiously walked out of the Chamber, as a protest, they said, against the attitude of the Government coalition parties. On April 11 the Henleinists sent a deputation to the Prime Minister to protest about the confiscation of their newspaper, *Die Zeit*, which had been seized five times in a fortnight.

To the Czechoslovaks and to foreign residents in Czechoslovakia there was always an exasperating hypocrisy about the fuss the Henleinists constantly made over the Press censorship, since every one knew—the Henleinists best of all—what sort of treatment National-Socialism meted out to opposition newspapers. And *Die Zeit* and the other Sudeten German Party papers were constantly allowed to print articles which only just fell short of being plain treason. The Germans could not complain of discrimination against them, either, for the censorship, when necessary, took just the same action against the Communist Press. I remember the Czechoslovak Communist daily, *Rudé Právo*, being confiscated three times in one week in June, and the question of its complete suppression was considered by the authorities.

The Easter holiday, in the middle of April, to some extent diverted public attention from politics. The Czechs made another effort to show that they were not such ogres as Henleinist propaganda declared. On April 16 President

AFTER AUSTRIA

Beneš declared an "Easter Peace," and granted an amnesty for political prisoners. In a speech in the Chamber of Deputies on the same day he said, "We believe in ultimate agreement between our State and Germany."

A total of 1235 Sudeten Germans benefited from the amnesty, but this did not make much impression on Henleinist opinion. The party Press argued that the number of Germans released merely showed how bad conditions were. No attention was paid to the fact that nearly 1000 Czechoslovaks were also amnestied. The figures did, indeed, seem considerable, but they did not point to any special discrimination against the Germans. They gave evidence only of the disturbed state of political life in the country, which was not denied.

As further evidence of goodwill the Government announced on April 22 that the municipal elections which had been postponed in October 1937 should be held in 11,000 communities out of a total of 15,000 in three instalments on May 22, May 29, and June 12. The ban on public meetings was also to be lifted.

(iii) "THE KARLSBAD PROGRAMME"

Meanwhile the Sudeten German Party had been preparing for its annual congress, and this was held at Karlsbad on April 23 and 24. It was now that Konrad Henlein made the speech in which he set out his terms for an agreement with the Czechoslovak Government—the terms which came to be known as the "Karlsbad eight points" or the "Karlsbad Programme."

Henlein's speech was a long one—in the printed text it runs to nearly 12,000 words—and it was built up on a pattern strikingly similar to that always used by Hitler. The pattern is a simple one. It is to recount the whole of German and European history since the Great War, and by the accumulation of alleged woes and injustices from the past twenty years give the impression that all of them are present simultaneously at the time at which the speech is delivered.

In phrases strongly reminiscent of almost every speech Hitler has made, Henlein declared :

We have overcome once and for all our hitherto prevailing disintegration into classes and parties. He who feels his duty towards his own people has now joined us. . . . Every Sudeten German recognizes that he must subordinate himself to the laws of his own nation, and that there cannot exist a higher duty than to live and act accordingly. . . .

With a touch of the political mysticism of Nazi Germany he went on :

The sorrows and sufferings of our people and our home have created our great union, have made us Sudeten Germans a fraternity of blood, fate, and will. . . . Our countless sacrifices on the battlefields, as prisoners, or in the famine-stricken homeland, must have a deeper meaning. Fighting or suffering, we revived with our own blood and our own sufferings that eternal, inalienable, and immutable claim to this our German home. . . . This soil has drunk the sweat of self-denying labour and the blood of countless Germans. . . .

After this opening there followed a long attack on the Peace Treaty, the League of Nations, and the methods of the Czechoslovak Republic. Finally, almost at the end of the speech, Henlein got down to the real reason why the Sudeten Germans were agitating against Czechoslovakia. This had nothing to do with good or bad treatment of minorities, it appeared. Not at all. The real trouble about Czechoslovakia was that it stood in the way of Germany's *Drang nach Osten*. Every one in Czechoslovakia had known this for a long time—indeed, it appeared to be well understood everywhere in Europe except among the eminent British politicians whom Henlein so successfully deceived during his London visits. All the same, it was interesting to have Henlein admitting in public that the question was not one of internal policy, but of foreign policy.

I want to put another question of great importance to the Czechoslovaks [declared Henlein]: How long will they try to keep up that dangerous and historically thoroughly untrue conception that it is the Slavonic task of the Czechoslovak nation to form the ' bulwark ' of all Slavs against the Germans ?

AFTER AUSTRIA

Czechoslovakia's claims at the Peace Conference, said Henlein, were made "only in order to remove the basis for every possible future German position towards the East, and to separate the Germans for ever from the Magyars and the Balkans."

Now Henlein was perfectly right in seeing Czechoslovakia as a barrier to German expansion in Eastern Europe, even if this had nothing to do with minority questions. But he deliberately misrepresented the question in making it to be one of Slavs against Germans. Pan-Slavism, in so far as it ever existed, disappeared from among the Czechoslovaks with the end of the War. Czechoslovakia was an obstacle to the *Drang nach Osten*, not because of any sentimental ideas about a "Slavonic task," but because France and Britain, having fought the War largely to prevent that drive to the East, wished to prevent its recurrence. It was with this intention that they established and supported Czechoslovakia after the War.

Czechoslovakia was not keeping up a dangerous historical conception about being a Slav bulwark against the Germans. It was merely carrying out the policy imposed upon it by the Allies, above all by France. Henlein's remarks should really have been addressed to France and Britain. But that, of course, would have been much less successful. It was much easier to attack them through their weaker partner, Czechoslovakia. Henlein therefore demanded :

- (a) A revision of the erroneous Czechoslovak myth of history.
- (b) A correction of that unhappy opinion that it is the particular task of the Czechoslovak people to form a 'bulwark' against the so-called German *Drang nach Osten*.
- (c) A revision of the spirit of Czechoslovakia's foreign policy which has led the State up till now constantly into the ranks of the enemies of the German people.

The last demand was a muffled way of saying that what Germany wanted was that Czechoslovakia should abandon her treaties with France and the U.S.S.R. Now the tragedy of Czechoslovakia is that she had the opportunity of doing precisely this several times during the past ten years, but

never did so because of repeated pressure from France not to cancel the alliance, coupled with innumerable assurances that any danger from Germany would at once see France by Czechoslovakia's side. Right until the last minute these assurances were repeated. Then suddenly France and Britain decided that they no longer wished to restrict Germany's drive to the East, and threw away the instrument which they had largely created for that purpose. It was Czechoslovakia's misfortune that, despite her efforts to have an independent foreign policy, she was, in fact, an outpost of the Western Powers—an outpost which these Powers callously abandoned without warning to the inhabitants so soon as it suited them to do so.

Only after making plain that the real German objection to Czechoslovakia was her foreign policy did Henlein turn to the question of the German minority.

It was now that he made a delightfully naïve admission of what foreign observers have often noticed in the Germans—namely, that they always feel oppressed unless they are oppressing others.

Instead of true democracy [cried Henlein] there has been set up the dictatorship of the Czechoslovak majority, bureaucracy, and police. . . . We Germans shall feel oppressed so long as we cannot do the same things and act in the same manner as the Czechoslovaks can.

It was a remarkable confession. Never before, I think, has a prominent German thus given away his nation's worst characteristic.

Finally, Henlein came to his 'programme.' What he wanted was :

- (1) Establishment of full equality of rights and of status as between the German national group and the Czechoslovak nation.
- (2) Recognition of the Sudeten German national group as a legal personality in order to guarantee this position of equal rights in the State.
- (3) Definition and recognition of the German area of settlement.
- (4) Establishment of German self-government in the German

AFTER AUSTRIA

- area of settlement in all departments of public life, so far as concerns the interests and affairs of the Germans.
- (5) Creation of protective legal provisions for those citizens who live outside the defined area of settlement of their nationality.
 - (6) Abolition of the injustice inflicted upon the Sudeten Germans since 1918, and recompense for the damage caused by this injustice.
 - (7) Recognition and application of the principle, German civil servants in German districts.
 - (8) Full liberty to profess German nationality and the German philosophical outlook (*Weltanschauung*).

The last point—liberty to profess the German *Weltanschauung*—was expanded at some length by Henlein. In doing so he gave another illustration of the now familiar fact that where a certain class of German is concerned what is sauce for the goose is by no means sauce for the gander. He declared :

For years German men and women have been persecuted and punished in this State only because their political or philosophical attitude threatened the property of the different parties in power.

To Czechoslovak public opinion this was, naturally, an infuriating accusation. The fact that Henlein and his henchmen were able with impunity to attack the Czechoslovak State was itself proof of the fantastic inaccuracy of this charge. But to realize its full insolence it is necessary to recall the violent intolerance of National-Socialism—the creed which Henlein openly professed—towards its opponents. The *régime* which imprisoned Pastor Niemoeller, Dr Schuschnigg, and thousands of others would have dealt very effectively with anyone who dared to make in the Third Reich a remark like this one of Henlein's. But to Henlein nothing happened. Because he lived under a tolerant and democratic government, he and every member of his party were able to attack with impunity the State to which they belonged.

National-Socialism, declared Henlein, “ corresponds with the manners and character of the German. Here he finds

his own outlook on life and morals after years of vain desire."

Henlein claimed that allegiance to the Nazi idea—and therefore to Hitler—must override frontiers. On such a basis the French could equally well claim that the French-speaking inhabitants of Quebec should owe first allegiance to President Lebrun and not to the King. He said :

Notwithstanding the political boundaries of the State, we cannot . . . withdraw from a political philosophy, an outlook on life and society, which is to-day joyfully confessed by all Germans all over the world.

Finally Henlein came out into the open and admitted that his idea was to introduce Nazi dictatorship methods into democratic Czechoslovakia :

Like the Germans all over the world, we too confess the fundamental National-Socialist principles of life, which inspire our thoughts and our actions. *We are going to shape the life of our German group accordingly, within the framework of the laws.*

The last phrase was an attempt to ward off charges of illegality. It was clearly absurd, since if Henlein really intended to introduce National-Socialism it would be impossible not to go outside "the framework of the laws." No legal framework could comprise such diametrically opposed systems as the tolerant democracy of Czechoslovakia and the fierce intolerance of German National-Socialism.

In October 1933 the Czechoslovak authorities had dissolved the then existent German National-Socialist Workers' Party of the Sudetenland, although they permitted its immediate successor, Henlein's Sudeten German Home Front—which afterwards changed its name to Sudeten German Party—because Henlein at that time repudiated National-Socialism. But in April 1938 Henlein repudiated his repudiation, and openly gloried in being a National-Socialist. If the Czechoslovak Government had in 1933 considered National-Socialism a danger to the State it was certainly no less so in 1938. And if it had decided, as it perhaps should have done, to dissolve the

AFTER AUSTRIA

admittedly Nazi Sudeten German Party it would only have followed the precedent of five years before. In the Karlsbad speech, indeed, Henlein implied that his Sudeten German Party had all along been National-Socialist. He said :

In 1933 the German National-Socialist Workers' Party was dissolved. . . . But it was already too late, because on October 1, 1933, I summoned the Sudeten Germans to unite, and was able to lead the new political movement to its present powerful strength.

Justified though the dissolution of the Sudeten German Party would have been, the Government took no action of the kind. It showed, indeed, a readiness to be conciliatory which the Sudeten Germans, and still more the Reich Nazis, took for weakness. Some of Henlein's "eight demands" were unacceptable, but the "programme" was not rejected outright, and the Government indicated that it was prepared to try and work out a settlement, provided that the sovereignty and integrity of Czechoslovakia were not impaired.

The most important of Henlein's "eight points" was the demand that the Sudeten Germans should be recognized as a legal personality. What this would mean in practice was not made clear at the time, though many Czechoslovaks were of the opinion, which was confirmed later, that it meant the establishment of a Nazi totalitarian state within the Czechoslovak Republic.

If the Prague Government had accepted unconditionally all the eight points, would Henlein have been satisfied? Would that have solved the Sudeten problem and avoided the territorial cessions to Germany? The answer is certainly "No." Henlein had orders from Germany not to be satisfied. This became more and more evident as events followed their predestined course. Each time it looked as though a settlement might be reached the Sudeten Party raised its terms. Even Lord Runciman admitted the futility of trying to negotiate honestly with the Sudeten German Party. The whole business of the 'negotiations' which went on through the summer of 1938 was really nothing but a piece of make-believe, a puppet-play. It

had no meaning, and was intended by the Sudeten German Party to have no meaning. The Czechoslovak Government knew too that these 'negotiations' were futile.

On June 19, the day the Henleinists published their "fourteen points," a high official of the Foreign Office said to me: "It is really ridiculous for us to negotiate with Henlein. It is pure pretence. The thing would have much more sense if we were negotiating direct with Berlin."

None the less, for the sake of world opinion, and to comply with advice from Britain and France, Czechoslovakia had to seem to take the Henlein demands seriously, had to do all it could to find a compromise.

In fact, Germany did not want the Sudeten Germans to be satisfied. A contented German minority in Czechoslovakia, loyal to the Republic, was no use as a weapon for the furtherance of German expansion in South-eastern Europe. Naturally, the rank and file of the Sudeten German Party did not realize that they were being thus manipulated. They had certain minor grievances, molehills out of which astute propaganda had made mountains, and they believed that Hitler's sole concern was to help them get redress for these grievances. Even some of the leaders of the party seem to have believed this. Dr Sebekowsky, a member of the party's negotiating committee, was shocked when I suggested to him that Hitler deliberately wanted to keep the Sudeten Germans dissatisfied. "No, I can't believe that!" was his answer; and it seemed to me that his surprise and distress at the idea were genuine. Dr Sebekowsky was one of what were generally known as the 'moderate' party leaders, but in the end it was not they, but the extremists who decided. It is probable too that many of the Sudeten Party leaders, except possibly Henlein himself, were not given in advance a full picture of what Germany's final intentions were. To do that would not have suited German strategy, because it is extremely likely that had the leaders of the Sudeten German Party known that their homeland was to be incorporated in the Reich many of them would have broken away, and the Sudeten Germans would have divided into

AFTER AUSTRIA

several opposing parties, as the Austrians were divided between the Heimwehr, Social Democrats, National-Socialists, and Catholic Patriotic Front. Such a division among the 3,500,000 Germans in Czechoslovakia would have made Hitler's task far more difficult. Of course, there were always Sudeten Germans so fanatically Nazi that they longed for incorporation with Germany at any price.

But even when the crisis was nearly at an end—that is to say, about September 15, when Henlein fled to Germany—the Sudeten German Party as a whole did not seem to know what the final outcome would be. The proof of this is the brief attempt made by certain Henleinists to form a party which would even at that late hour continue negotiations with the Government. The instructions which the Sudeten German Party received from Berlin were not long-term ones, but simply such as were required by the changing, day-to-day situation—the final aim which Berlin had in mind being kept hidden from sight.

CHAPTER III

A DEMOCRACY DEFENDS ITSELF

HENLEIN's Karlsbad speech was a turning-point in the struggle between the Sudeten Germans and the Czechoslovak Government. It finally and definitely identified the principles and actions of the German minority in Czechoslovakia with the principles and actions of Nazi Germany. No less was it a turning-point in Anglo-French relations with Germany and Czechoslovakia. Almost immediately after Henlein's speech on April 24 events began working up to the crisis of the May 21 week-end. Developments occurred along two lines, or 'fronts'—that of Germany-Sudetenland-Czechoslovakia, and that of Britain-France-Germany-Czechoslovakia. Germany took the initiative, and Anglo-French efforts were directed to smothering the explosive force of that initiative. Germany sought to exert pressure on Prague in two ways: (a) by the agitation of the Henlein party, and (b) by distracting and deflecting British and French interest in, and support for, the Czechoslovak Government. In this second aim Germany had the assistance of her 'Axis' partner Italy. Britain and France sought to exert pressure on Prague to obtain the appeasement of the Sudeten German Party, and on Berlin to obtain a renunciation of force. The Prague Government was thus in the difficult position of being the focal point of two lines of pressure, one from Berlin and one from Paris-London, while at the same time it had to meet the challenge of the Henleinists within the Republic. All three currents mingled in the crisis of May 21, 1938. That date was a memorable one in world history. It was memorable because on that day Nazi-ism received the first setback it had ever suffered. That this defeat of Nazi-ism was so temporary does not alter its significance. It was, above all, significant, because it

showed that Nazi-ism *could* be defeated. "This May 21 was unbearable!" shouted Hitler, in furious rage, on September 26. The very extent of the rebuff Hitler received on that "unbearable" date no doubt added to his determination to be avenged.

The inner history of this date unbearable to Hitler is an important part of the story of Czechoslovakia's final defeat, and deserves to be told in detail.

(i) THE SUDETEN GERMANS AFTER KARLSBAD

To the general public and the Czechoslovak Press Henlein's "Karlsbad demands" were quite simply unacceptable. Tension between the Henleinists and their opponents in the Sudeten country mounted immediately after the Karlsbad speech. The Government was uncertain whether or not to permit the customary celebrations of Labour Day on May 1. Banning the celebrations involved the risk of provoking a popular explosion of indignation, not only among the Germans, but among the Czechoslovak workers. Permitting the celebrations meant a risk of clashes between the Germans and the Czechoslovaks in the Sudeten towns. Finally, special police arrangements were made to deal with this second risk, and the announcement was made that the Labour Day demonstrations would be allowed as usual.

Following this announcement, the National Council—a body made up of two representatives from each political party supporting the Government—issued an appeal to all parties. This year they were to give up the customary demonstrations by separate parties, each holding aloof from the other, and join together in a common demonstration under the slogan: "For the defence of the freedom and integrity of the State."

The parties obeyed the appeal. On May 1—a Sunday—in every Czech and Slovak village and town there were joint demonstrations. In Prague, under the new green of the beech-trees in the Wenceslas Square and the long red, white, and blue flags of the Republic, a vast crowd of

some 120,000 demonstrated for democracy and Czechoslovak independence. Seldom had there been so great an assembly on Labour Day.

In the German-speaking regions along the frontier the Sudeten German Party staged its own demonstrations. In the quasi-uniforms of jack-boots, black breeches, and white shirt, or at the least wearing the prescribed white stockings below shorts or plus-fours, the young men of Henlein's following paraded and shouted and sang. Motor-cyclists dashed hither and thither. Everything was done to give the demonstrations the semi-military stamp characteristic of the Nazi Party demonstrations in Germany. The streets were hung with flags and banners. The Czechoslovak national colours flew side by side with the Henlein party emblem—a white shield bearing in Gothic script the interlaced letters S.d.P. for "Sudetendeutsche Partei."

At Reichenberg, textile town in North Bohemia, only seven miles from the German frontier, 10,000 Sudeten Germans marched and waited for hours to hear Henlein speak. From the surrounding districts detachments of party members streamed from early morning into the main square of Reichenberg. Looking at the crowd one was struck by the high proportion of women present. One wondered who had stayed at home to look after the children. Presumably the old people, since in the crowd itself was hardly anyone over forty. Interesting too was the total absence of any sign of that economic distress which, according to the Henleinist Press, was starving the Sudeten Germans into extinction. The factory workers, shopkeepers, and peasants who made up the crowd looked robust and decently fed and clothed. Certainly a half-starved population could never have been on its feet for hours and put into a demonstration the energy that these people showed.

Henlein arrived at 1 P.M., and was greeted with the Nazi salute—the raised right arm. The crowd shouted itself hoarse. Not always with "*Heil Henlein!*" The forbidden "*Heil Hitler!*" was heard often enough. The few Czechoslovak police about paid no attention. They had been instructed to hold an easy rein.

A DEMOCRACY DEFENDS ITSELF

Henlein spoke for twenty minutes, reiterating the essentials of his Karlsbad speech. Behind him on the raised platform glowed the white S.d.P. shield, and to one side stood a couple of grave Czechoslovak police officers taking a careful shorthand note of everything Henlein said. Loud-speakers, hung from the lamp-standards in the square, carried his voice to every one of the ten thousand.

Accompanied by his bodyguard of some fifty motorcyclists, Henlein drove off in his luxurious Reich German motor-car to repeat the speech in other Sudeten towns. In Reichenberg the crowds slowly dispersed ; tramped home singing. The favourite song was the one which burst into popularity immediately after the conquest of Austria :

To-day Germany is ours—
To-morrow the whole world !
(*Heute gehört uns Deutschland—
Morgen die ganze Welt !*)

Despite the parades and speeches of the Sudeten German Party leaders, there was a good deal of nervousness that day in the German towns. The Leipzig radio put out alarmist stories of violent clashes between Germans and Czechoslovak soldiers in Troppau (Opava). The Sudeten population, who never questioned the veracity of the Reich broadcasts, wondered whether the same thing might not occur in other places. The rumour went round that there had been an insurrection. The truth was that in Troppau there had been, the evening before, a slight clash between the Czech population and some Henleinists who had attempted a demonstration, despite the fact that in this particular town there was a ban on outdoor meetings owing to local foot-and-mouth disease. The Czechs had protested against the German demonstration, and police had been called in to disperse the crowd. In the end, apart from one or two minor disturbances such as this, the Labour Day celebrations passed off quietly.

In Prague the Government continued its preparatory work on the Nationalities Statute, which, as Prime Minister Hodža had announced, was to codify and extend the existing

minority rights. In order to allow the various parties to conduct their campaigns for the forthcoming municipal elections, the ban on public meetings was lifted on May 7.

Disturbing events followed quickly after this restoration of democratic rights.

In the Sudeten country Henleinists whispered to one another that at any moment Hitler would enter Czechoslovakia. "The Day" was almost there. A popular jingle, passed round by word of mouth, declared :

In March the Führer has his joke,
In April he does what he likes,
In May he knocks off Czecho,
And in June, when the flowers bloom,
Prague's just as German as Vienna.

*(Im März macht der Führer Scherz,
Im April macht er was er will,
Im Mai holt er sich die Tschechei,
Und im Juni, wenn die Blumen blühen,
Ist Prag bereits so deutsch wie Wien.)*

A particularly effective argument with those who doubted the imminence of the Führer's arrival was to say that the Sudeten German Party knew it was so, because England agreed—Henlein had been told that when he went to London. In the excited atmosphere of the Sudeten villages this assertion worked wonders for the Henleinist cause. The Social Democrats however still resisted. Annoyed, Henlein repeated in his paper, *Die Zeit*, the declaration he had made in March that those outside his party were no Germans ; they were "internal émigrés."

In Prague the Henleinist Germans staged a demonstration at the "Deutsches Haus"—a social centre for the Prague Germans situated in the street called "The Moat," in the centre of the city. A certain Professor Pfitzner, of the German University, declared, "If historical rights counted the Germans would be masters of Prague." Outside the "Deutsches Haus" some young men sang the Czechoslovak National Anthem. This was reported by the Reich German Press under the heading : "Czech Mob Provokes Prague Germans."

A DEMOCRACY DEFENDS ITSELF

On Saturday, May 14, Henlein returned to Czechoslovakia from his visit to London. That same week-end the Czechoslovak authorities got on the track of an extensive plot to spread subversive propaganda attacking the President, the Government, and the Army—not this time among the Germans, but among the Czech population itself.

On Friday there had been disorders at Eisgrub, in Southern Moravia, which made the police suspect that some considerable action was on foot. A crowd of 250 collected on the main road outside the town, to which it proceeded to march with the expressed intention, according to persons present, of provoking a clash with the local Czechs. Outside Eisgrub members of the crowd threw stones at a detachment of gendarmes that came out to meet them. Six of the gendarmes were hurt. The latter finally dispersed the crowd and arrested fifteen of the men, whom they relieved of a collection of weapons that included life-preservers, daggers, and a revolver. During the night house-to-house searches were made. Two people were arrested, a number of lengths of rubber hose were collected, and a quantity of what the official police report called "forbidden printed matter" was seized. The prisoners were to be prosecuted for disturbance of the peace and acts of violence.

The same evening at Gross-Kunzensdorf, in the Freiwaldau district of Northern Moravia, a frontier-guard observed two suspicious-looking men with bicycles to which were fastened large parcels. The frontier-guard arrested one of the men. The other escaped, leaving behind his bicycle with its attached packet. The guard took his prisoner along to the *gendarmerie* station. Here the parcels were opened. They contained several thousand leaflets, in the Czech language, attacking President Beneš and Prime Minister Hodža. Thus the Czechoslovak authorities got warning of what was afoot. Instructions were sent to the police and the *gendarmerie* throughout the country to keep watch for the leaflets. On Saturday and Sunday they made their appearance. In widely separated places in Bohemia and Moravia bunches of young men were out scattering the papers. In many cases the distributors ran straight into the hands of the

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

waiting police. On Saturday evening, for instance, at Mělník, a small town to the north of Prague, Hellmut Palme, a printer from Böhmisches-Leipa, was caught scattering leaflets from a motor-cycle. He was questioned and handed over to the Prague police. Search was then made at his parents' home, where he lived, in Böhmisches-Leipa. Nothing was discovered. Another arrest, however, put the police on the track of the organizer, or one of the organizers, of the whole business. At Rakovník, a small industrial town directly west of Prague, towards midnight on Saturday, two men who had distributed leaflets were detained by the police and questioned. The men were Richard Feigl and Franz Halbhuber. They came from Pürstein, near Kaaden, only ten miles from the German frontier. They told the police that they had been given the leaflets by Franz Langer, a courier of the Sudeten German Party. This was the first definite evidence the police had received that the Henleinists were connected with the subversive leaflets, which, it must be remembered, were addressed to the Czech population, not to the German. More arrests of Sudeten German Party members followed. At Trautenau, a town in Eastern Bohemia, less than five miles from Germany, the S.d.P. member Karl Hoffman was caught in the act of distributing leaflets. In Reichenberg ten arrests were made. Nearly all were members of the Sudeten German Party. Altogether twenty-three persons were arrested in widely separated towns and villages of Bohemia and Moravia. The distribution of the leaflets was equally widespread. One packet of them was received on Saturday by the Reichenberg Czech newspaper, *Severočeský Živnostník a Obchodník*. In Pilsen, at 3.30 A.M. on Sunday morning, two men, challenged by the police, fled and left behind packets containing 5000 leaflets. In Prague, at 4 A.M. on Sunday, 150 were found scattered about the Čech Square, in the Vinohrady district. At Troppau, Moravia, several hundreds blew about the side-streets. Some were found in post-offices addressed to prominent public officials or to army officers.

The leaflets were roughly printed on coarse paper of different colours. The green ones attacked President

Beneš, the red ones were directed against the army, those on white paper were against Prime Minister Hodža. "The contents of the leaflets," said the official report, "aims at shaking the confidence of Czechoslovak citizens in the State, and in destroying their trust in our allies—in particular, France." The leaflets were stamped with a crudely drawn version of the Bohemian heraldic lion over the inscription *Liga Českého Lva* (League of the Bohemian Lion).

Of the Czech in which the leaflets were written it was said at once that it was good for a foreigner. It showed immediately, by a certain queerness of phrasing, that no Czech was the author. There were printers' errors too which would never have been made by a printer of Czech nationality.

In itself this unsuccessful attempt at shaking the morale of the Czechoslovak public was crude and faintly ridiculous. What was significant about it, however, was the fact that such elaborate arrangements had been made for distributing the leaflets over the greater part of Western Czechoslovakia, that considerable sums of money must have been spent on the business, that the leaflets were certainly printed in Germany, and that the Sudeten German Party, or Herr Henlein, who professed loyalty to the Czechoslovak State, was the active agent of the campaign.

In the meantime in the German towns excitement remained high. At Saaz on May 16 there were demonstrations by Henlein supporters because a baker's apprentice was charged with breaking somebody's windows. In two or three other places there were similar scenes based on equally trifling pretexts. The chief purpose of these demonstrations seemed to be to provide material for the wildly extravagant stories of the Reich German Press and broadcasting.

(ii) THE SUDETEN CAUSE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

While the S.d.P. were thus hard at work creating trouble inside Czechoslovakia the Nazi cause was being promoted in the wider field of international relations. The important centres were Rome and London. On May 3 Hitler,

accompanied by von Ribbentrop, his Foreign Minister, by Dr Goebbels and a retinue of numerous other Ministers, officials, and generals, made an exceedingly pompous State visit to Italy. In Rome Hitler discussed with Mussolini what Italy would do should Germany go to war on account of Czechoslovakia. Mussolini refused to say more than that he would give diplomatic support to the Germans. It was clear that the Duce was not impressed by the German argument that Reich control of Central and South-eastern Europe was in the interests of Italy. However, diplomatic support was all that Hitler needed at the moment, and if it were strong enough it could be very useful indeed. While one partner in the Rome-Berlin Axis was preparing a surprise for Europe the other could be distracting Europe's attention.

Italian diplomatic assistance to Germany began to come into play on May 14—the day, it will be remembered, on which Henlein returned to Czechoslovakia from his important visit to London, and the day on which the subversive leaflet campaign was discovered in Bohemia and Moravia. It was immediately evident that the purpose of Italy's action was to weaken Franco-British collaboration, to distract France from affairs in Central Europe, and, in general, to draw the attention of Europe to the Spanish problem. At Genoa, on May 14, Mussolini declared that the Rome-Berlin Axis was solid all through; Italo-German friendship was lasting; it was no use hoping for a conflict between the two totalitarian states. Mussolini went on to say pleasant things about Mr Neville Chamberlain and the Anglo-Italian Agreement of April. Then came a reference to France, which in that country was considered far from pleasant. Mussolini said:

You will permit me to be circumspect about the conversations with France, because they are still in progress. I do not know whether they will reach a conclusion, if for no other reason than that in a matter of extreme immediacy—the war in Spain—we are on opposite sides of the barricade. They desire the victory of Barcelona, and we, on the contrary, desire and mean to see the victory of Franco.

Finally came the assurance that "Nazi Germany desires

European peace no less than we do," and the threat that if the democracies were preparing a "war of doctrines" the "totalitarian states will immediately form a *bloc* and will march to the very end."

Mussolini's speech was immediately followed by instructions to the Italian newspapers telling them to accuse France of sending arms across the Pyrenees to the Spanish Government. The Italian Press duly carried out its instructions. By sending arms to the Spanish Government, it declared, France was uselessly prolonging the war. This was against British interests, because it prevented the Anglo-Italian Agreement coming into force. Thus the attempt was made to sow discord between France and Britain. Similar attacks on France continued right up till the critical week-end of May 21.

The other front on which the German offensive was prepared was London. Konrad Henlein arrived there on an allegedly private visit on May 12. But he did not come to see friends or supporters among the British upper class. Not at all. He met some of the men who were among the most noted opponents of German expansionist aims—above all, Mr Winston Churchill. Also, since Konrad Henlein was a well-connected rebel, he saw the British Government's Chief Diplomatic Adviser, Sir Robert Vansittart. This meeting too was a 'private one.' While he was in London Henlein surprisingly had a talk with M. Jan Masaryk, Czechoslovak Minister to the Court of St James's, and one of the few Czechoslovaks who had no illusions about the real meaning of British interest in Czechoslovakia. This meeting was interesting, since it was the first time that the Sudeten German leader had ever personally expressed his views to an official representative of the Czechoslovak Government. Henlein stayed two days in London, and went home very satisfied. He was convinced that he had persuaded Mr Winston Churchill, Sir Archibald Sinclair, the Liberal Opposition Leader, and the other British he met that he, Henlein, was a most law-abiding person, that his party had no other aims whatever than the removal of certain justified grievances, that there was absolutely no

question of attacking the Czechoslovak Constitution or the integrity of the State, that he was a loyal subject of Czechoslovakia, and so forth. Henlein has the manner, when he likes, of a quiet, persuasive schoolmaster, and he used that manner in London in May, as he had done during his previous visits there.

The Sudeten German Party was apparently well pleased with the result of Henlein's talks in London. On May 19 Herr Frank, Henlein's personal deputy, informed a meeting of the S.d.P. political committee of what Henlein had done in London. Influential people there, said Frank, fully understood and appreciated the aims of the Sudeten German Party. There was every reason to be satisfied with the result of Henlein's visit.

With a usefully tense atmosphere of political excitement worked up in the Sudeten country, with Italy deflecting international attention away from the Czechoslovak question, and British suspicions lulled—as it was believed—Henlein departed to Germany on Thursday, May 19. Frau Henlein went with him, and it was stated that the Sudeten leader was going for a holiday, which was rather peculiar in view of the fact that the first instalment of the much-demanded municipal elections were to take place on May 22. Holiday or not, Henlein had an interview with Hitler at Munich, whither the Führer's advisers were also summoned.

Almost immediately after Henlein's departure to Germany signs of the coming crisis began to manifest themselves. Before relating the events of the May 21 week-end, however, it is necessary to look back over what France and Britain had been doing in connexion with the Czechoslovak problem.

(iii) BRITAIN, FRANCE, AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA

On April 27 M. Daladier, the French Prime Minister, and M. Bonnet, Foreign Minister, arrived in London on an official visit. (They came only three days after Henlein's speech at Karlsbad.) With the British Government they discussed Czechoslovakia. Daladier said that of course

France would help Czechoslovakia if it were attacked. Chamberlain said that Britain wanted peace. Both Daladier and Chamberlain agreed to get to work to persuade Prague and Berlin to settle their differences peacefully.

The French Ministers went home after three days, and early in May Britain and France began actively intervening in the Czech-German dispute. They entered on that course of persuasion which led Czechoslovakia to Munich.

On May 7, in the morning, Mr Basil Cochrane Newton,¹ British Minister in Prague, drove from the British Legation, former residence of the Counts of Thun, to the Czechoslovak Foreign Office, the *baroque* Černin Palace, and was received by Dr Kamil Krofta, Foreign Minister and famous historian of his country.

What Mr Newton told Dr Krofta was to the effect that Britain took a friendly interest in Czechoslovakia's affairs, and was prepared to help the Czechs to solve the problem of the German minority. Mr Newton referred to Mr Chamberlain's statement on March 24, in which he had said that the British Government was "glad to take note of, and in no way underrate, the definite assurances given by the German Government as to their attitude." In the same speech Mr Chamberlain had expressed satisfaction at what Czechoslovakia was doing to meet the reasonable wishes of the German minority.

The Czechoslovak Foreign Minister was given to understand that no doubt his Government would wish to continue earning these good marks. In fact, the British Government, said Mr Newton, expected Czechoslovakia to go to the utmost possible limit of concession in satisfying the demands of the Sudeten Germans. That the utmost possible concession meant, in the British view, handing over territory to Germany was not at this stage revealed.

A little later on the same day M. de Lacroix, French Minister in Prague, was also at the Černin Palace, making a statement similar to that of his British colleague. Franco-British collaboration in Czechoslovakia had begun.

On May 11 Sir Nevile Henderson, British Ambassador in

¹ Now Sir Basil Newton, K.C.M.G.

Berlin, informed Herr von Ribbentrop, German Foreign Minister, of what Mr Newton and M. de Lacroix had said to Dr Kamil Krofta on the previous Saturday—May 7. This was to show that Britain and France were doing their part in promoting peace. Sir Neville said he hoped Germany would do as much. Ribbentrop's reply was apparently that this move by Britain and France was in the right direction, but it would only be really useful if it persuaded the Czechoslovak Government to accept Henlein's demands.

To push the Czechs as far as that was more than the British were prepared to attempt at the moment. Indeed, they would have had no success at all in such an attempt in May, when the resistance of the Czechs had not been broken and they had not been driven into a corner. As it was, Anglo-French advice to do everything possible to placate the Henleinists was not too willingly followed—and for a thoroughly sound reason. It was this: every step the Government took, in response to Anglo-French advice, towards mollifying the Henleinists only had the effect of making them more obstreperous than ever, more defiant of the State authority, and more oppressive to their non-Henleinist German and Czech neighbours. Anglo-French pressure on Prague only made the task of the Sudeten German Party easier. It did so in more ways than one. Urging the Czechoslovak Government to further concessions was not the only way. Anglo-French advice had the effect of strengthening the position of those Czechoslovak parties and persons in Parliament and in the Cabinet who had always been favourably disposed towards Henlein, because they welcomed anything that was anti-Marxist. The Czechoslovak Cabinet, it must be remembered, was a coalition representing six parties which ranged from the conservatism of the Agrarians to the moderate socialism of the Social Democrats and the socialist nationalism of the Czechoslovak National Socialists. Existing differences of opinion within this Cabinet were consequently accentuated by the support which Britain and France gave, involuntarily and perhaps unwittingly, to the pro-Henleinist Cabinet Ministers.

A DEMOCRACY DEFENDS ITSELF

In so far as placating the S.d.P. involved slackening control by the State authorities in the German areas, conciliatoriness became a highly debatable problem, of which it was difficult to find the solution.

The German areas were not purely Henleinist, and the Government—or at least certain members of it—did not want to lose the support it had among the non-Henleinist Germans. But to keep this support involved giving them protection by the Czechoslovak State police against Henleinist terrorism.

On May 1, for instance, the Social Democrat Germans had had a difficult time. Attempts were made by the S.d.P. to break up their meetings. Despite this they put up a brave show in many towns and villages. Wenzel Jaksch, their leader, was not a man to allow himself to be easily intimidated.

On May 12 Jaksch appealed in the Chamber of Deputies to the Government to stop the terrorization of the German population by the Henlein party. Provocation was a daily occurrence—"Government authority," he said, "is completely undermined."

The democratic members of the Cabinet were in favour of answering Jaksch's appeal, even though to do so meant a stricter control of the Sudeten districts and the presentation of an excuse to Henlein to raise complaints, in his turn, about Czechoslovak 'terrorism.'

The State police, however, were not under the control of the democratic members of the Cabinet, but under the Agrarian Party representative, Dr J. Černý, Minister of the Interior. And Dr Černý appeared to be singularly indifferent to Henleinist activities in the Sudeten country. His failure to give adequate protection to the anti-Henlein Germans aroused many bitter complaints from the Social Democrats. From other sides too came objections to Dr Černý's tender consideration for the Sudeten German rebels. Most important of all the army authorities were far from pleased. They pointed out that if the Minister of the Interior could not keep order within the State the army's task of defence in the event of war would be made far more

difficult. They insisted that something must be done. There were laws against terrorization ; it was necessary to enforce them. As a result of these protests an official statement was issued on May 13, declaring that " the Government will insist unconditionally on the respect of all laws—in particular, of the law against terrorization. It will not permit any form of terrorization, whether national, political, social, or economic."

The Sudeten German Party on the very same day indicated their appreciation of Dr Černý's silent support by announcing the establishment of Henleinist Storm Troops. These were the so-called " Freiwilliger Schutzdienst," or " F.S. " (" Voluntary Protection Service "). The purpose of the F.S. was supposed to be to provide a bodyguard for Henlein, to keep order at meetings, and to protect national interests in the German-speaking districts.

The difficulty of protecting the Czechs and non-Henleinist Germans without giving excuses for S.d.P. propaganda was illustrated by Herr Frank's accusation, at the meeting on May 19 of the S.d.P. political committee, that Czechoslovak officials " interfered with the free expression of opinion by members of the party." A formal protest, he said, had been lodged with the authorities.

In so far as " the free expression of opinion " was taken to include the bullying, browbeating, and terrorizing of those who thought differently, the Czechoslovak officials did no doubt interfere. This protest of Frank's was in a way a welcome sign. It indicated that the police and *gendarmérie* in the Sudeten districts were showing less inclination to turn a blind eye on Henleinist disturbers of the peace.

After this meeting of the S.d.P. committee events inside and outside Czechoslovakia began to move rapidly towards their dramatic climax on May 21.

(iv) MAY 21, 1938

Municipal elections were due to take place on Sunday, May 22, in some 2000 communities of Bohemia, Moravia-Silesia, and in Prague. In North Bohemia Henleinist posters

filled every available patch of wall space. "Cleanse the Council Rooms!" was one slogan: "Who does not vote for Henlein is a traitor to his nation!" was another.

The interest of the local population was, however, concentrated less on the election than on the question of when "He" was coming. When, they asked each other, would be "The Day"? The Sudeten German Party election campaign was backed up, as usual, by the Reich German radio and newspapers. On May 19 the *Berliner Tageblatt* violently attacked Dr Hodža's proposed Nationalities Statute—which it had not even seen. It said:

If the Government is not able, or does not wish, to solve the problem, there is no other way but a plebiscite. Self-determination is a matter which must no longer be merely talked about, but must be made a reality if there is to be real peace in Europe.

The German Press campaign, which had for weeks been splashing under enormous 'scare' headlines stories of alleged Czechoslovak atrocities, now reached a pitch of hitherto unparalleled fury. In Prague the Government felt it had every reason to fear a German invasion, carried out on the pretext of sending help to the 'oppressed' Sudeten Germans. Or possibly, it was thought, the technique might be first a rising by the Sudetens themselves, followed by an inrush of 'volunteers' from Germany—as had happened in Spain.

To add substance to the alarm, reports reached M. František Machník, Minister of Defence, that Germany was moving Reichswehr troops up to the Czechoslovak frontier. Troops from the garrisons at Leipzig and Nürnberg, it was reported, had been moved nearer the frontier. The reason might be merely to exert psychological pressure on the Sudeten German population, who were to vote on the following Sunday. But one could not be sure. It was wise, perhaps, to take precautions. Other reports came in of Reichswehr concentrations at Klosterneuburg, in Austria, at Bamberg, in Bavaria, and in Saxony. One or two travellers who crossed the frontier from Austria at this time, however, denied these stories. There was no sign of German troop movements, they said. The position remained hazy.

Czechoslovak officials told me that the first information was given them by the British Intelligence Service, and that their own sources of information only came in later. British quarters in Prague denied this, and said the Czechoslovaks started the story first, and that, on independent inquiry, certain of the Czechoslovak reports proved to be incorrect. None the less, the situation was considered sufficiently serious for Sir Neville Henderson in Berlin to inquire of Herr von Ribbentrop whether there was any truth in the reports of German troop movements in Southern Germany. He was told that there had been some, but that these were of a purely normal kind—mere routine dispositions. Dr Mastný, the Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin, asked the same question, and received the same answer.

The Czechoslovak army was not, however, satisfied with this, and quietly moved troops up to the frontier to occupy the concrete fortifications. This precaution was completed by Friday, May 20. In Prague and elsewhere there were no indications of anything out of the ordinary. The political outlook, in fact, seemed hopeful; it appeared as though a serious beginning was about to be made in dealing with the minorities problem. Prime Minister Hodža, in a statement to the Press, said that negotiations were to be started at once. The basis had already been laid down in informative discussions. The Government had prepared a far-reaching solution of the whole problem.

In the evening the political committee of the Sudeten German Party met to consider the Premier's proposals. It decided it could not enter into negotiations until a stop had been put to Czechoslovak 'terrorism' in the Sudeten country. A demand was made for freedom of expression and equal rights. To the Government the S.d.P. answer had a familiar ring.

The army meanwhile considered further measures. Disturbing reports from Germany continued to arrive. If the troop movements were merely a routine affair they seemed none the less surprisingly elaborate, and were, moreover, uncomfortably close to the Czechoslovak frontier. Near Bautzen, in Saxony, ten miles from the border, heavy

artillery had been moved into position. Farther east, in the Iser Mountains, were concentrations of tanks and armoured cars. The disposition of troops made it look as though the German army were planning to move in through the gaps between the Iser Mountains and the Giant Mountains and cut off the peninsula of territory round Reichenberg. In Austria there were said to be similar troop movements. South of the Moravian border, the road from Klosterneuburg to Stockerau was said to be packed with soldiers.

In view of these reports M. František Machník ordered a partial mobilization. The order went out in the early hours of Saturday morning. While it was still dark men were making their way to the barracks, each carrying with him a small suitcase of personal belongings. The instructions simply said that the men were being called up for special exercises. Within about six hours all the men summoned had reported for duty. They totalled about 100,000. Among them were a certain number of Sudeten Germans.

In Prague there was no particular sign of anything out of the ordinary. In the factories, shops, and offices, however, certain men were missing. Within an hour or two the whole city knew there had been something like a mobilization. Were the men really only called up for exercises? Were they going to keep order among the Sudetens during the election? Was there going to be war? No one wanted war, but all were ready to accept it stoically if it came.

In a number of Prague families Sudeten girl-servants suddenly gave notice, and without reason—nervousness due to Henleinist "whisper propaganda," people said. On the streets it was noticed that not a single pair of the familiar Henleinist white socks was to be seen.

During the morning the reserves who had been called up took their positions in the Sudeten areas. The German inhabitants told each other how they had heard the sound of lorries going by in the night, and a continuous clatter of horses. They had thought the lorries and the cavalry were from "over there." So great had been the belief that Hitler was coming that on the day before people had

bought candles to illuminate their windows, in accordance with the best Nazi practice. They had bought flowers to greet the Führer. Swastika armlets were got ready and sewn on to coat-sleeves. The reaction when the Czechoslovak uniforms were seen was profound. Armlets, S.d.P. badges, disappeared in panic haste. For the first time the credulous, excited Sudeten villagers had received a splash of cold water. No one could understand what had gone wrong—why "He" was not there. For the first time some faint questioning began to creep into minds bemused by fanatical propaganda. And for the first time the democratic Germans felt that they could breathe freely again. Social Democrats reported that the Czechoslovak military preparations had shaken the illusions of the Henleinists. Before May 21 the latter had never really believed that Czechoslovakia would resist a German invasion. They had imagined the German troops marching in with bands playing and flags flying, the smart uniforms completely unruffled by a single hostile bullet—just as it had been in Austria. They had never really grasped the fact that the Czechoslovak army could shoot as well as the German, and that it was ready to do so.

On the whole population of the Republic, Czech and Slovak as well as German, the speed and efficiency of the partial mobilization on May 21 had a deep moral effect. It showed to doubters that Czechoslovakia was not prepared to capitulate to the first threat, and, moreover, that she had effective means of resistance. Many Sudeten Germans who had been on the verge of joining Henlein must have been restrained from doing so by the army's action, and many Czechs and Slovaks must have had their confidence in the Government strengthened.

Outside Czechoslovakia nervousness persisted. On the Saturday Sir Nevile Henderson and the French Ambassador, M. François-Poncet, were again in Herr von Ribbentrop's room at the Foreign Office inquiring about the German troop movements. M. François-Poncet took advantage of his visit to point out that France had an alliance with Czechoslovakia. If the latter were attacked France, under

the treaty, would give assistance. Herr von Ribbentrop was apparently infuriated by the questions of his visitors. He insisted, in language by no means of a diplomatic suavity, that no military preparations were under way. The inference that his anger betokened a bad conscience appeared, however, a legitimate one. Moreover, the German Foreign Minister declared most emphatically that the Führer would certainly protect German minorities abroad. How this was to be done except by military means was not made clear. Sir Nevile Henderson, declared the *Völkischer Beobachter*, on May 25, "wasted valuable time with silly repeated questions." The official Nazi newspaper did not, however, indicate whose valuable time had been wasted. Was it Sir Nevile Henderson's? Herr von Ribbentrop's? Or perhaps, one might ask, that of the German army? Did the British and French interventions put the German military time-table out of joint? The question cannot be answered definitely, but the wrath displayed by Herr von Ribbentrop, by the whole German Press, and subsequently by Hitler most decidedly seemed the wrath of frustration, of baffled plans.

In Britain and France further steps were taken to impress on Germany that an attack on Czechoslovakia was not just then wanted. In London the Foreign Office issued a statement which made it plain that the Sudeten German Party's refusal to negotiate was not looked on favourably. In the same statement went a reminder that Britain might, after all, join in a war which involved France. In Paris M. Daladier had ready an order for general mobilization. M. Bonnet, Foreign Minister, received the diplomatic representatives of Britain, the U.S.A., Russia, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, and told them all that France would fulfil her obligations to Czechoslovakia. At the same time, however, French diplomatic pressure on Prague was renewed. As on May 7 it was insisted that Czechoslovakia must go to the limits of concession in order to keep the peace. Once again the Czechoslovak Government followed the advice of friend and ally, and agreed to go further than the concessions previously offered to the Sudeten

German Party. Despite the partial mobilization and the international excitement, Dr Hodža went ahead with his plan for a Nationalities Statute. A formal invitation to negotiate on the statute was sent to the Sudeten German Party.

The Henleinists at the meeting on the previous evening had decided that they would not negotiate so long as Czech 'terrorism' continued. A statement to this effect appeared in *Die Zeit* on Saturday. The action of the Henleinists was not, however, as intransigent as their words. Despite the Czechoslovak troops in the Sudeten country, despite the fact that two S.d.P. couriers on a motor-cycle were accidentally shot dead at Eger by a Czechoslovak gendarme when they disregarded his order to stop—despite these evidences of what, from the Henleinist point of view, was 'terrorism,' the S.d.P. nevertheless began discussions with the Czechoslovak Government. On May 21 itself Herr Frank, Henlein's deputy, Herr Kundt, Parliamentary leader, and Dr Neuwirth, legal adviser, were received by Dr Hodža, and on Monday, May 23, Henlein himself hurried back from Germany, where he had seen Hitler, and had a long talk in Prague with the Prime Minister. Why was there this sudden change of tactics by the S.d.P.? If the stories in the Reich Press were to be believed, Czech 'terrorism' was almost on a level with the Nazis' own past efforts. According to the "Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro," the official German news agency, on May 21 a hundred Germans had been injured at Komotau by Czechoslovak soldiers; by the next day it was asserted that 1000 persons had been injured. Even apart from these fantasies there was the unfortunate affair of the shot S.d.P. couriers. Henlein had excuses enough for refusing to see Dr Hodža. But he did not refuse, although the far from conciliatory attitude of the Sudeten German Party during the past week and the events of May 21 would have made a refusal no surprise. Why was there this change?

It may be argued that there was no change at all. It is conceivable that the German troop movements had been

intended solely for the purpose of exerting psychological pressure on the Sudeten Germans during Sunday's elections so as to drive as many voters as possible to the Henleinist cause, that the protests against Czech 'terrorism' were merely bargaining manoeuvres, and that the S.d.P. had all along intended to accept the invitation to negotiate. By giving the Germans the benefit of very many doubts this may be considered possible.

Against this view must be set a number of significant facts. Why did Henlein, on the very eve of the elections, suddenly go to Germany? As leader of his party his place was surely among his supporters on polling day—that is, if it was to be a normal election. Was he ordered to Munich because Germany was, indeed, planning some *coup* for the election week-end and it was necessary to get the S.d.P. leader out of reach of arrest in Czechoslovakia? It is interesting that on the eve of the final crisis in September also Henlein suddenly departed to Germany, leaving his subordinates behind; and on that occasion there was a warrant for his arrest. Again, if Germany was really planning nothing why were Ribbentrop and other political and military chiefs summoned to a special conference with Hitler in Munich on Sunday night? On Saturday Ribbentrop had given Sir Neville Henderson the impression of a man in a towering rage. Over what? Over questions which any diplomat has a right to put? Over the partial mobilization of a small country like Czechoslovakia? Still fuming with wrath, Ribbentrop had left Berlin on Saturday night to attend the conference with the Führer. If Hitler had all along intended that Henlein should meet Dr Hodža no such conference was necessary. It was not even necessary to summon Henlein to Germany.

On Sunday, May 22, came the report that the British Embassy in Berlin had ordered a special train to take away the women and children of the Embassy. It is possible that the train was not ordered on Sir Neville Henderson's instructions, but by a nervous subordinate. It is possible that the train was ordered, not for use, but as a demonstration, as a means of impressing upon the Germans the

fact that the British Ambassador took an extremely grave view of the situation. These points, if interesting, are not essential. What matters is that the news of the special train not merely impressed the Germans—it created a sensation. Suddenly ordered transport for British women and children is usually a symbol of imminent war. Thus it is understood in European Government offices. And thus was the whole of Europe startled to attention.

From what subsequently happened in Germany and Czechoslovakia it seems clear that at the meeting of the Nazi leaders in Munich on Sunday the chances of a successful lightning attack on Czechoslovakia were weighed up and found wanting. The promptitude of the Czechoslovak mobilization, the energetic attitude of Britain and France, the unknown quantity presented by Poland, the silence on the part of Italy, certain weaknesses in Germany's defence—all these factors together appear to have decided the Führer to abandon any plans for a lightning blow that week-end. Germany did nothing, and Henlein was sent back to Czechoslovakia with instructions to go quietly, to see Dr Hodža, to accept the invitation to negotiate.

The fact that Germany took no action during the May 21 week-end was immediately presented as proof that none had ever been intended. Subsequently Hitler, in his Nürnberg speech on September 12, declared that on May 21 not a single German soldier had been moved from his peace-time garrison. On September 26 he said that Germany's inaction was actually "a really eternal German patience." Is it possible that Hitler was substantially speaking the truth? Is it possible that Germany was justly indignant, and that there was, in fact, no German military threat to justify the Czechoslovak partial mobilization? Such a question may seem strange in view of what has already been told of the history of May 21. Nevertheless, though on balance it appears that events did happen as related, certain things about that critical week-end still remain hazy, and it is necessary, in order to get at the truth, to consider possibilities that seem at first sight out of the question.

Let us examine the various German arguments put forth

against Czechoslovakia and Britain. These may be summarized as follows :

1. Dr Beneš and the Government invented the lie that Germany had mobilized troops and was about to invade Czechoslovakia. . . . The Prague Government needed this lie as a pretext for their own monstrous work and terrorist oppression in influencing the elections.¹

Was the story of the German mobilization a lie ? Certain reasons for rejecting this theory have already been indicated. Sir Neville Henderson, it must be remembered, went again and again to the German Foreign Office on May 19, 20, and 21 to inquire about the reports of German troop movements. It is unlikely that he would have thus persisted unless his information was both full and reliable. An ambassador does not risk making a fool of himself by getting panicky over every alarmist report put about by interested parties. Further, Ribbentrop did admit at the first meeting, on May 19, that there had been certain troop movements. Naturally he described them as normal. It was only in subsequent meetings that he denied the reports altogether. A measure of agreement with Ribbentrop's contention was, however, given by some well-informed British quarters in Prague, who considered that the reports of German military preparations had been exaggerated. The same quarters were suspicious too of the motive which inspired Czechoslovak officials to declare that first news of German troop movements had come from British sources when this was not, in fact, the case. But even if the Czechoslovak reports were unduly alarmist, or exaggerated, even if, in the desire to attract attention, British sources were incorrectly credited with the first news, it is extremely difficult to accept Hitler's assertion that there was no reason whatever for anxiety on May 21, that the entire story was a lie. Both Britain and France had means of checking up on the reports of German troop concentrations. If we believe Hitler we have also to believe that Britain and France did not use these means, and that there was no basis of independent information to justify the repeated British and French *démarches* of May 19-21. On the

¹ Hitler at Nürnberg, September 12, 1938.

other hand, the fact that not merely one inquiry was made at the German Foreign Office, but several, is surely proof that the Czechoslovak reports of troop movements were found to be based on fact.

If these considerations were not in themselves sufficiently weighty Hitler's subsequent actions and his own words appear to give, as it were, posthumous confirmation to the reports of May 21. In his Nürnberg speech Hitler accused Czechoslovakia of casting unjust suspicions on Germany. The British and French intervention he described as a 'low-down' business which a Great Power could not suffer a second time. It may be agreed that no country likes to be the object of unjustified suspicions. But the best way of silencing those suspicions is surely not to take precisely that action which confirms them for the future. Yet this is what Hitler did. He said :

I carefully drew all the conclusions from the events of May 21. Under the impression of the events of May 21 I took on May 28 the following very serious measures : (1) The strength of the Army and Air Force was enormously enlarged ; (2) I gave the command for the immediate extension of our fortifications. I can give the assurance that since May 28 the greatest work of fortification of all time has been under way. . . .

Is this the action of a man who wishes to prove that suspicions against him of aggressive intentions are unjustified? Or is not this much more the action of a man who has been made to realize that his military strength is inadequate for his intentions?

The new fortresses, moreover, were built in the west—*i.e.*, precisely where they could stop French military help to Czechoslovakia. The events of May, said Hitler, in the same speech, "compelled us to make a certain correction in our standpoint." Precisely : the British and French action compelled Hitler, for the time being, to realize the meaning of Czechoslovakia's alliance with the West. The fortification of the Rhineland had been begun in 1936, but the fact that it was suddenly decided vastly to speed up and increase these defences shows that until the May 21 week-end Hitler had

A DEMOCRACY DEFENDS ITSELF

not seriously reckoned with Franco-British military action on behalf of Czechoslovakia. May 21 made him believe that such action must be expected, and that means of parrying it must be found. Accordingly, the quick march into Czechoslovakia was called off until such time as it could be carried out free from interference from the west. Hitler certainly did draw "all the conclusions" from the setback of May 21. He ordered more aeroplanes, more soldiers, and more fortresses. He did so on May 28. But is that proof that he had no intention of using existing aeroplanes, soldiers, and fortresses on May 21? Is it not much more clearly proof that there were not enough of them on that date? This seems to be the real truth of the matter.

2. The second argument advanced in Germany was, briefly, that the Anglo-French interventions were a stunt, deliberately planned to increase the prestige of those countries. For example :

The events of the week-end will be designated in history as a model of the most Machiavellian diplomacy which had more to do with the restoration of the prestige of the democracies as against the authoritarian States than with preventing war.¹

Or :

Press opinions all over the world prove that the legend of a planned German attack has been trumpeted abroad in order to garland the English with the crown of glory as saviours of the peace.²

The question of whether the planned German attack was a legend or not has already been discussed. There does, however, remain the point that Britain especially may have made the most of the alarm for reasons such as those advanced by the Nazi newspapers. The subsequent course taken by Britain and France in pressing Czechoslovakia to surrender was hardly a logical sequel to the heroics of May 21. When the danger of a German attack on Czechoslovakia was much greater than in May Britain took no steps to call

¹ *Völkischer Beobachter*, May 25, 1938.

² *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 24, 1938.

Germany to order. On the contrary, Mr Chamberlain wrote to Hitler saying : " I feel certain you can get all you want without war and without delay." Which represented the true intention of British policy—May 21, or September 21 ? It can hardly be denied that the Munich Agreement and all that has since followed it are much more consistently in line with previous British attempts at pacifying the angry dictators than was the policy of May 21. Was that policy then a divagation from the main path—a mistake, a misunderstanding ?

If it was a mistake it was a curiously successful one, from the point of view of those who oppose the German drive for world dominion. Perhaps that was why it was never repeated. It was successful too from a purely British nationalist point of view. As the Nazi newspaper angrily announced, it restored the prestige of the democracies, and, above all, of Britain. Not since Sir Samuel Hoare's famous speech at the League on September 11, 1935, calling for collective security against Italian aggression in Abyssinia, had the British public heard such cheering news about its Government as on May 21, 1938. But, alas, as with Abyssinia, so too with Czechoslovakia, heroics preluded betrayal, a firm front gave way to surrender—to surrender once again of other people's property.

Yet the policy of May 21 was not a mistake. On the contrary, it was deliberately undertaken. Shortly after the visit to London at the end of April of the French Ministers diplomatic correspondents of the London newspapers learned that definite plans had been made for joint Anglo-French action in the event of a German-Czechoslovak crisis. Instructions to keep this confidential information quiet were obeyed. Only after the May 21 crisis did *The Times* reveal this fact of the Anglo-French advance preparations. Inevitably this revelation was seized upon by the German Press as proving that the whole crisis had been deliberately staged to boost British and French prestige. There is, it must be admitted, some truth in the Nazi charge. It is not the whole truth, since there were the undeniable disturbing facts of the German anti-Czechoslovak propaganda cam-

A DEMOCRACY DEFENDS ITSELF

paign and of the German troop movements. But since Britain and France ultimately hurried to procure for Hitler all he wanted it is difficult to suppose that they ever seriously intended to thwart him. After the annexation of Austria in March the democracies badly needed a tonic to their prestige. In May came the opportunity to put into practice the preparations made during M. Daladier's visit to London and to administer the tonic. Anglo-French action on May 21 was not a mistake, but neither did it represent the main line of policy. It was an effort to do something, but not too much, in order to keep up an appearance of not yielding to German threats. It correctly indicated the amount of 'face-saving' considered necessary by the British and French Governments before they could put into effect the true policy of handing Czechoslovakia over to Germany.

3. The third Nazi objection to the British action on May 21 was that Britain had no business to interfere in Central Europe :

England certainly has no mandate to regulate things in Central Europe, nor any right of decision, and if she makes such claims other Great Powers could with equal justification make the same claims in areas which for political, strategic, or other reasons have been proclaimed a special interest of England.¹

This argument, rejected by the British Government in March when the annexation of Austria was under discussion, was accepted in September. On March 14 Mr Chamberlain, clearly nettled by the German rejection of the British protest over the *Anschluss*, said he refuted the statement that the Government were not within their rights in interesting themselves in the fate of Austria. For one reason, both Britain and Austria were members of the League, and both, along with Germany, had signed treaties securing the independence of Austria. Further, he said, the Government were always interested in Central Europe, because what happened there largely affected security elsewhere. If this was true of Austria, how much more was it true of Czechoslovakia, which was not merely a member

¹ *Börsen-Zeitung*, May 26, 1938.

of the League—little though this counted—but had defensive alliances with France and the U.S.S.R. Yet when it came to the point the alleged British interest in Central Europe revealed itself as an interest in dodging responsibility, in getting out so that Germany could get in. Mr Chamberlain himself said on November 1, 1938, in the House of Commons:

Geographically Germany must occupy a dominating position in relation to the states of Central and South-eastern Europe. As far as this country is concerned, we have no wish to blot Germany out from these countries or to encircle her economically.

The first sentence is correct so far as it goes. It would be more complete if Mr Chamberlain had added that Germany's dominating position was also political and economic. The point is, why was Mr Chamberlain's recognition so belated? He said in November only what Mr Churchill and others had made plain immediately after the *Anschluss*. Why the pretence all through the spring and summer of 1938 that Britain had an interest in Central Europe when the final conclusion was that this was not so?

Mr Chamberlain's other remark that "we have no wish to blot Germany out" from the countries of Central and South-eastern Europe was a comical understatement, since Germany does between 30 per cent. and 60 per cent. of the foreign trade of no less than seven countries in Central and South-eastern Europe, and in Asia Minor. This position is not new. It has been so for the past two years.

If economic interests are a criterion the Germans were justified in saying that Britain had no right to interfere in Central Europe. The British Government knew it too, as it now admits. In the protest over the annexation of Austria, in the intervention on May 21, it accomplished nothing of lasting value. All it did was to mislead the British public and the people and Government of Czechoslovakia.

The German recriminations over May 21 were, it is significant, directed almost wholly against Great Britain, and to a much smaller extent against Czechoslovakia, despite the fact that it was the partial Czechoslovak mobilization which was the immediate cause of the German

rebuff. Germany was angry with Britain because she was surprised and disappointed. Hitler had been led to believe that Britain would make no opposition. Suddenly it appeared that this was not so. Britain unexpectedly let him down. Britain actually said "No" to threats against Czechoslovakia. This was definitely not playing the game—the game which may be summarized, to invert the Marxist phrase, as "capitalists of the world unite!" No wonder the Germans were angry.

Noticeably out of key among the chorus of indignation, however, was one voice—a voice by no means still or small. It was that of Field-Marshal Goering's newspaper, the *National-Zeitung* of Essen—the city of heavy industry, of steel, of armaments. It did not attack the British Government. By no means. It praised Mr Chamberlain. It said he had "all the best British qualities which justify . . . trust . . . and esteem." Britain, gently hinted the *National-Zeitung*, might well join the anti-Comintern.

The clenched fist with which the Third International is trying to clutch at Central Europe must no longer oppress the Sudeten Germans. British policy might legitimately help in the task of ending terrorism and injustice.

German heavy industry knew its man. Sooner or later the capitalists of the world would unite.

The crisis of May 21 ended, so far as Britain was concerned, with a statement in Parliament by Mr Chamberlain declaring that Britain and France were telling the Czechoslovaks to take "every precaution for the avoidance of incidents," and to "make every possible effort to reach a comprehensive and lasting settlement by negotiation with the Sudeten Party." To this, said Mr Chamberlain, the Czechoslovaks replied that they would do so.

The Czechoslovak municipal elections on May 22, which had brought the latent tension to a head, passed off so quietly that the outside world hardly noticed them. Not so, however, the Henlein party. They gained 88 per cent. of the votes cast in the Sudeten area. They reaped the benefit of years of systematic propaganda and terrorization, the effects of which could not be effaced by the last-minute

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

arrival of the Czechoslovak troops, even though their presence on polling day did possibly keep the Henleinist vote a little below what had been expected. It is time, therefore, to give some account of the methods used by the Sudeten German Party to gain its majority.

CHAPTER IV

NAZI PROPAGANDA METHODS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

ONE of the things which helped to persuade the British Government that the German-speaking areas of Czechoslovakia should be ceded to Germany was undoubtedly the success of the Sudeten German Party in giving the impression that it had almost the whole of the German minority behind it. The Czechoslovaks and the non-Henlein Germans insisted that this was not the case, but British opinion never seemed to believe this—if, indeed, it ever really heard any other voice but that of the Henleinists. In the end events showed that Konrad Henlein had not, in a crisis, anything like the determined support which he claimed. But by then the whole minority question had completely disappeared behind the much bigger one of whether there was to be war or not against Germany. National-Socialism thus established once again a situation enabling it to bury the inconvenient past.

Henlein could certainly claim a majority of votes, but when it came to a matter of fighting for or against the Czechoslovak Republic his followers showed but a lukewarm welcome to battle, and were quickly damped down by the Czechoslovaks. Yet even the voting support for Henlein was to a great extent a fraud. It was so because of the methods by which it was obtained. It is impossible to judge of the extent of real support for Henlein by voting figures. To estimate their significance it is essential to know something of the way agitation and propaganda were conducted in the Sudeten towns and villages, and of the circumstances under which the elections took place. It would be the greatest mistake for any English reader to suppose that the 1938 municipal elections were the genteel, sleepy affairs to which we are accustomed.

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

The Sudeten German Party propaganda campaign which began on the morrow of Germany's annexation of Austria continued almost without interruption until the final disruption of Czechoslovakia six months later. It was conducted by means which had been tried and found admirable in the Third Reich and in Austria. Indeed, certain methods had been tried already in the Sudeten country. In 1935 the "Sudetendeutsche Heimatfront" ("Sudeten German Home Front"), as the "Sudetendeutsche Partei" ("Sudeten German Party") was first called, had conducted an election campaign in which the Henleinists showed themselves as well instructed in the tricks of Dr Goebbels—or, if that is considered not proven, as remarkably thorough imitators.

One outside circumstance particularly helped the Sudeten German Party in 1935. The world slump of 1931-32 did not touch Czechoslovakia seriously until later—till, in fact, 1934-35. At that time there was very considerable economic distress in the Sudeten towns and villages, particularly in those where the local industries worked mainly for export. Henleinist propaganda consistently misrepresented this economic distress as being due to deliberate anti-German action by the Prague Government, which was ridiculous, since the unemployment figures showed that conditions among the German industrial population were no better and no worse than those among comparable localities with purely Czechoslovak population.

As a result of the economic distress and various forms of propaganda and pressure the Sudeten German Party obtained at the 1935 elections 1,249,530 votes, or about 62 per cent. of the German electorate. The German Social Democrats dropped from 506,750 in 1929 to 299,942. The other German parties, the Farmers and the Catholics, lost still more heavily, dropping over 50 per cent. of their votes.

Considering the efforts made by the Henleinists and the conditions favourable to this extremist party produced by the economic situation, the result was not as satisfactory to the Sudeten German Party as it had expected. In order,

therefore, to make its position look even a little better, it claimed a percentage of 67·4 of the German electorate. To do this it deliberately left out of account the total of at least 120,000 votes given to the four German Communist deputies elected.

After this election co-operation between the Sudeten German Party and the National-Socialist Party in Germany became steadily closer. On May 27, 1936, an agreement was made for the 'co-ordination' of the Sudeten German Press, which hitherto had been allowed a certain amount of independence. Henlein's paper, *Die Zeit*, his weekly *Rundschau*, and various local newspapers now shouted in unison. From this time they became, as it were, colonial editions of the Goebbels-controlled Press in Germany.

In 1936 too plans were discussed in Nazi Party circles in Germany for armed intervention in Czechoslovakia. The war in Spain which broke out that summer suggested the manner by which it would be done—an armed uprising by the Sudeten Germans followed by intervention of 'volunteers' from the Reich. In the end the idea of military action finally dropped out of sight. None the less, the German offensive against Czechoslovakia, which reached its triumphant conclusion in 1938, really began in earnest two years before.

I remember discussing in the summer of 1936 with an official of the German Propaganda Ministry the agreement made on July 11 of that year by which Germany recognized the independence of Austria. The Propaganda Ministry official turned suddenly to a map of Europe which hung on the wall and said, "It won't be long now before we settle with this ridiculous state, once and for all!"

The "ridiculous state" which he indicated on the map was, however, not Austria at all. It was Czechoslovakia. To the obvious question, "Would it be correct then to assume that Germany is contemplating action against Czechoslovakia in the near future?" the answer was merely "No."

The further question as to what, in that case, had occasioned the official's remark was answered with a shrug of the shoulders and a reference to some other topic. It seemed that

the official felt he had said too much and wished to minimize the significance of his remark. He added, "Well, it is ridiculous!"

Since it seemed clear at the time that Austria was much more likely than Czechoslovakia to be the first victim of Nazi aggression, one was tempted to dismiss this official's outburst as merely a display of snobbish contempt for Czechoslovakia. This attitude is particularly common among Germans of the older generation, especially if they lived in the pre-War Austro-Hungarian Empire—as this one had—and had been brought up to regard the Czechoslovaks as a lower class rather than as a separate race.

The idea of settling with "this ridiculous state" might, then, be purely a personal wish-fulfilment. Nevertheless, the suddenness and vehemence with which the remark was made seemed to suggest that it had a definite background in the speaker's mind, and also that the remark was worth recording in the journal which I kept at the time.

Subsequent events showed that there had been a reason—a reason too within the competence of the Propaganda Ministry—for this official's statement. He had perhaps been guilty of temporary hyperbole in speaking of settling once and for all, but action there certainly was. Austria for the time being having been put into cold storage, there began in the following month—August—that violent campaign of German propaganda against Czechoslovakia which continued until September 1938. Moreover, as later events showed, there was no irrelevance in speaking of Czechoslovakia when the subject under discussion was Austria. Germany's action against the one was conditioned by her degree of success against the other.

The Reich Propaganda Campaign.—The Reich German offensive against Czechoslovakia had actually begun in 1933, when National-Socialism came to power. It was, however, only spasmodically carried on during the first years of the Nazi régime. Not until 1936 was this war, conducted with every weapon short of bombs and shells, systematically prosecuted. After 1936 there was seldom, if ever, a break in the barrage of downright lies, falsifications, and distortions of

facts about Czechoslovakia put out by the German Press and broadcasting, and by its hired newspaper allies in Hungary and Poland, or in the ceaseless agitation of the German-subsidized party inside Czechoslovakia.

The Reich German newspaper campaign which began in 1936 aimed, first of all, at representing Czechoslovakia as an "outpost of Bolshevism," as an "aeroplane carrier for the Soviet Union." Dr Goebbels made a notorious speech at the National-Socialist Nürnberg Congress in September, in which he said, ". . . on Czechoslovak territory there are thirty-six Red aerodromes, built by the Soviet Union." It was a plain lie, and Goebbels knew better than anyone else that it was a lie. But the story went round the world, and gathered embellishments as it went. The Soviet aerodrome stunt was persisted in by the German Press until about January 1937. In that month came a new variation on the 'Bolshevist menace' theme, which was managed with particular ingenuity. Stories about an alleged secret plan for preparing Czechoslovakia as the basis for a campaign by the Soviet Union were supplied by the German Propaganda Ministry to certain pro-Nazi newspapers in Hungary—the *Esti Ujsag*, for example, and the *Magyarsag*. These stories were then sent back to the German newspapers by their Budapest correspondents, and were reproduced at great length under scarifying headlines, such as: "Czechoslovakia under Moscow Dictatorship—Czechoslovakia Prepared as Outpost of Comintern" (*Völkischer Beobachter*, January 7, 1937); or: "Under the Eyes of the Authorities—Appearance of Whole Bolshevist Army in Czechoslovakia" (*Völkischer Beobachter*, January 12, 1937); or again: "Plan for Red Army Offensive—Alarming Revelations" (Berlin, *Börsen-Zeitung*, January 21, 1937).

There was not the slightest truth in any of these stories, and even Dr Goebbels wearied of the Bolshevist theme when the Czechoslovak General Staff challenged the German Military Attaché in Prague to inspect for himself, and without informing the authorities beforehand, any place which was supposed to contain a Soviet aerodrome. The challenge was never accepted.

Throughout 1937 the German Press exaggerated every real incident and invented thousands, with the sole purpose of exciting animosity against Czechoslovakia. At one time there were 'scare' stories about the alleged deliberate attempt of the Czechoslovaks to kill the Sudeten Germans by starvation. "Children Dying of Hunger," "Cold, Creeping Mass Murder," "More Coffins than Cradles"—these were some of the German newspaper headlines. At another time came blood-curdling stories about the alleged ill-treatment of Sudeten German political prisoners. To the Czechoslovaks this line of propaganda seemed particularly impertinent, coming as it did from a country notorious for the torturing of prisoners in concentration camps. The climax was reached in June 1937 with the Weigel case.

Bruno Weigel was a Reich German subject, who had been employed as a chemist in a Czech gas-mask factory. He was arrested on an espionage charge and expelled from Czechoslovakia in May. On June 18 the *Völkischer Beobachter*, official organ of the Nazi Party, published a statement by Weigel asserting that he had been tortured by the Czechoslovak police in the previous November. At once the German Press opened out with such headlines as : "Sadistic Torturing of German Prisoner in Czech Gaol—Kept in Chains and Beaten with Rubber Trunchcons," "Cheka Methods of the Czech Police," "Monstrous Challenge to the Reich"—so the story read in every newspaper in Germany.

It would be wearisome to recapitulate all the details of the manifold excuses Germany found for working up hatred against Czechoslovakia. The examples given are only a fraction of what was, on one pretext or another, day after day printed in the Reich newspapers, and, it must be remembered, broadcast in every news bulletin from the German radio stations. For the purpose of agitation among the Sudeten Germans the latter were especially important. Reich newspapers could be stopped at the Czechoslovak frontiers, but it was impossible to prevent the Sudeten Germans listening to the powerful "Deutschlandsender," or to the stations at Leipzig and Breslau.

In November 1937 municipal elections were due, and a

month beforehand the Sudeten German Party got energetically to work on its election propaganda. At this time Henlein was in a bad position with his followers, among whom there was much dissatisfaction with his leadership. Particularly inopportune for him was the arrest on October 6, on homosexual charges, of his close friend and collaborator, Herr Heinrich Rutha. There was a definite split between the as yet slightly restrained National-Socialism of Henlein and the out-and-out Nazis among the party members. Moreover, working-men supporters were wondering whether they should not go back to the Social Democrats. There was the possibility that the Sudeten German Party might begin to crack up from within. The situation had begun to cause concern in Germany when suddenly the opportunity occurred—or was manufactured—for German propaganda both in the Reich and in Czechoslovakia to come to the rescue.

At Teplitz-Schönau on October 17 a crowd collected round the expensive Horch motor-car presented to Henlein by his German business-men friends. Three Czechoslovak police-officers took steps to disperse the crowd, since outdoor public meetings had been forbidden prior to the elections. A Sudeten German Party deputy, Herr Karl Hermann Frank, who was present, refused to obey the police orders and forcibly resisted. In the scuffle Frank was struck once by a rubber truncheon. He was taken to a police-station, and then immediately released as soon as his identity was established, since he was protected by the immunity granted to deputies of the Czechoslovak Parliament. The whole affair was a minor one for a country with opposing political parties, which, moreover, were preparing for an election. But it was just the thing to distract attention from the rift inside the Sudeten German Party,

Out of this trifling incident in Teplitz-Schönau the Henleinists manufactured a vast uproar. They sent telegrams to President Beneš, to Prime Minister Hodža ; they threatened that the result would be a European war ; an open letter from Henlein to President Beneš—published, incidentally, in Reich German newspapers—declared that

territorial autonomy must be immediately granted to the Sudeten Germans, or there would be appalling consequences.

In Berlin Dr Goebbels sent instructions to every newspaper in Germany to go all out against Czechoslovakia. "Czech Cheka Methods Menace European Peace" was the headline on an article in the official *Völkischer Beobachter*, which said :

The Sudeten Germans are no longer prepared to put up with the Czech lust for domination. They oppose the attitude of Prague, and are determined to clean out the police methods introduced into their homeland.

Dr Karl Vicerbl, a Sudeten German who had fled to the Reich, wrote in the same paper :

At the cradle of the Czech State lies and hatred, murder and terror, stood sponsors. They have never left it during the brief course of its life. Its claim to existence at Versailles was grounded in lies, forgeries, and distortions.

The *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* called the incident "provocation of the whole German nation." The *Berliner Tageblatt* said it was "an insult to the German race."

Dr Mastný, the Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin, protested to the German Foreign Office against the Press campaign. The protest was rejected, and the *Börsen-Zeitung* called it "the height of Czech impertinence."

The Czechoslovak Government then gave their answer to the whole upheaval. They cancelled the municipal elections. Now if the Sudeten German population had been really on the brink of spontaneous revolt against insupportable oppression here was its chance. In fact, nothing whatever happened. The propaganda died down, and the suicide of Heinrich Rutha helped to dispose of the rebel movement inside the Sudeten German Party.

It was these elections, postponed in 1937, which were held in the late spring of 1938. In preparation for them the Sudeten German Party used the methods of propaganda, of terrorization, of economic boycott and blackmail, which it had so well rehearsed during the previous three years. So far as was possible in a democratic country the atmo-

sphere created in the Sudeten towns and villages was not very different from that which precedes a plebiscite under Hitler.

Character of the Sudeten Country.—Many circumstances helped to bring this about. In the first place, the Henleinists' task was greatly simplified by the character of the Sudeten country. In the mainly German-speaking frontier regions of Czechoslovakia there are no large towns—even such a world-famous place as Karlsbad has a population of only 25,000—and there are a large number of villages and small towns in which almost the whole population is engaged in one industry, making toys perhaps, or textiles, gloves, glass beads, or mouth-organs. In these villages and small towns everybody knows everybody else, and has known him or her from childhood. In the smaller factories—and there are many such—the overseer or manager knows all about the private life of his workpeople. The inhabitants of these small towns and villages see each other every day in the streets, on the way to work, out shopping. Gossip is a quicker news service than the local newspapers. If some one is sacked from a factory, allegedly because there is not enough work, but, in fact, because he is politically 'unsound,' then every other works manager hears about it the same day. If some small shopkeeper's window is smashed because he refuses to join the Henlein party no one dares to tell him who did it, for fear of suffering the same annoyance.

In these Sudeten villages during the last two or three years the personal animosities and private spite of village life took on a political colouring. If Schmidt was a Social Democrat and Müller a Henlein man then the difference of party was an excellent reason why these two, who never did get on well together, should hate each other still more. Müller's jealousy of Schmidt's more successful grocery store was easily rationalized as opposition to his political views. Nothing was easier, in these circumstances, than to get Müller to spread reports around that the wicked Socialists—among whom Schmidt was particularly evil—were planning to set up a Bolshevik dictatorship if they were elected, and to seize the post-office savings of all honest

folk, or abolish marriage, or commit any other dastardly crime that village imagination can invent. Still better, under guise of electioneering, Müller would shout insulting and aggressive remarks about Social Democrats whenever Schmidt was about. If Schmidt happened to be a quiet or timid man he was probably bullied into silence about his opinions. If his party did not lose his vote it would, in any case, lose him as a canvasser. Moreover, if Schmidt found his trade suffering from the stories put round about him he probably felt obliged to change over to the Henlein party.

‘Whisper Propaganda.’—This form of pressure was generally known in Czechoslovakia, as in Germany, as ‘whisper propaganda.’ It was, in fact, simply gossip. As such, its influence was vastly underrated by foreigners who came to the Sudeten country, and even by the Czechoslovaks themselves. It began originally in a non-personal way. Stories about what Hitler would do and what Russia—always the great bogey—was planning were brought by Sudeten Germans from relatives over the frontier in the Reich, or picked up in the local barber’s shop, or elaborated from some fantastic tale on the Nazi wireless, and spread around by word of mouth in the Sudeten country. The most welcome subject-matter for these stories was, naturally, that of “The Day”—the day when Hitler would come in triumph to the Sudetenland. The ‘whisper propaganda’ was always announcing new dates for Hitler’s arrival, each one more certain than the last. During 1938 at least a dozen such dates must have been set in circulation. With the prophecy of “The Day” were associated various ingenious notions. For instance, at one time people were telling each other, “Pay no more taxes—it’s waste of money, for “The Day” is coming.” At another time in July it was being solemnly asserted in the Böhmerwald region that the Czechoslovak Government rule did not apply there, and that the Sudeten German Party could do as it pleased. “The Day” was fixed for July 24. It is easy to dismiss this ‘whisper propaganda’ as ridiculous. So it was, but it had reduced the Sudeten Germans to such a peculiar hysterical, psychotic state that

NAZI PROPAGANDA METHODS

they believed anything. For example, the prophecy about July 24 resulted in people who had gone to the Böhmerwald on holiday suddenly cutting short their stay and going home.

The most incredible tales were spread by gossip. One, for instance, was that the German Dye Trust had invented a new secret gas—a 'sleeping-gas.' When "He" came the gas would be sprayed on the Czechoslovak soldiers, who would all promptly collapse in deepest slumber, and not wake up till they had been neatly fettered and taken prisoners. All Germans would, of course, be given special masks to protect them against the 'sleeping-gas.' It was nonsense, and yet people believed such things. They believed because they had a craving for anything which could make them feel that Germans were superior to Czechs and Slovaks. The inferiority complex which affects all Germans is stronger among the Sudetens than among any other branch of the race. The Sudetens even feel inferior to other Germans. For this reason any story, however crazy, which made Germans seem strong, noble, and altogether superior to all other races was certain to find an eager welcome among at least a part of the Sudeten population, and thus to drive them like bleating sheep into the Henleinist fold. Dr Goebbels' propaganda establishment in Berlin was astute enough to recognize the character of the Sudeten craving, and to see that the right sort of stories were provided.

This 'whisper propaganda' was poisonous enough even in its impersonal form, but it did not stop at that. It busied itself with people's private lives; it pursued individuals with ceaseless malicious gossip. It is difficult for outsiders, coming from the anonymity of big city life, to realize how great an influence gossip has in a village community. And even for those familiar with village conditions in remoter parts of the British Isles it is hard to appreciate how politics could envenom personal relations as it did in the Sudeten country in the last two or three years.

If the 'whisper propaganda' about individuals did nothing else its most frequent result was the social ostracism of the persons attacked. It became an everyday occurrence

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

in the Sudeten country for people who disliked National-Socialism, even if they did not actively oppose it, to find themselves avoided by former friends and acquaintances. This was, in many cases, simply the result of the terrorization methods of the Sudeten German Party. New members of the party did not dare to mix with their former friends, lest some gossip should report them to the S.d.P. officials, and thus get them into difficulties.

Newspaper Attacks.—The 'whisper propaganda' form of pressure was much appreciated by the Henlein party, because it was completely safe. No laws against terrorization can cope with malicious gossip. But the leniency of the Czechoslovak State authorities—a leniency, it must be noted, in part forced upon them by Britain and France—encouraged the Henleinists to perfectly open, public attempts at intimidation. The small-town local newspapers seemed to compete with each other in violence of language and scurrility. Particularly notorious was the *Volksblatt* of Graslitz (Kraslice), a mining town of 13,000 inhabitants, and centre of the musical instrument industry. On May 28, 1938, annoyed that some local Germans still dared to oppose Henlein, the paper came out with this elegantly worded threat :

Sudeten Germans ! Do not forget !

The way certain persons acted in these recent gravely decisive days—persons who still take upon themselves the honour of being considered Germans—must remain eternally branded in our memory.

There are, thanks be to God, not many of them, and we know where they stand, and what sort of opinions they parade for show.

The national treachery they have committed for years reached its climax in the last few days. They and their deeds must be regarded with unparalleled contempt.

The electors on Sunday and on June 12 will provide the opportunity for finally settling with these people. The Council Chambers must be thoroughly cleansed of this element of national treachery. In contacts with them they must be made to feel that Sudeten Germans despise them utterly.

Sudeten Germans ! Never forget that !

NAZI PROPAGANDA METHODS

Read far away from the local excitements this sort of thing seems faintly ridiculous. But in a small town like Graslitz it would certainly be taken seriously. People reading its angry denunciations would not stop at the generalizations. They would name names to themselves, and to their friends and relatives. And somebody's shop would lose yet another customer or two.

An even more open incitement to terrorization was contained in an appeal to Germans to send their children only to German schools, which was posted up on fences and walls at Ingelsberg, in Czechoslovak Silesia, at the beginning of June 1938. It read :

Should this warning not receive attention by various German parents, then we shall take good note of these scoundrels, and shall persecute them as traitors to their own nation, and they will not be accepted any more into our determined, iron German ranks. The gallows are already waiting for the traitors and ruffians Schmidt and Vogel, and for the women Krynes, Sobotka, and Vogelín. We greet our Führer, beloved everywhere, with the oath of fidelity : "Down with the traitors of the Nation ! Long live our Führer ! *Sieg Heil !* "

The stupid, herd-like intolerance of this kind of thing was repeated over and over again throughout the German-speaking districts of Czechoslovakia. It would be possible to fill a book with detailed accounts of case after case of individuals being terrorized in one way or another by the Sudeten German Party. One Prague liberal daily, the *Prager Mittag*, published each day during July, August, and part of September 1938 particulars of terrorization cases. In fairness, the paper also published every denial it received of any of these reports. I have before me a file of some sixty cuttings from the *Prager Mittag* ; of them only two are denials. It may be objected that the absence of a denial does not prove the authenticity of a story. Even that objection cannot, however, eliminate a large number of cases of terrorization—namely, those which resulted in action in court.

Pressure by Employers.—Under Czechoslovak law it

was a punishable offence to exercise pressure on anyone to make him change his political party, or to discriminate in any way against a person on political, racial, or religious grounds. During 1938 violations of this law in the Sudeten territory grew increasingly numerous. Besides 'whisper propaganda' and attacks in print, the most usual way of exercising pressure on Germans to bring them into the Henlein party was through the employers. Because the Sudeten German Party was anti-Marxist—*i.e.*, against the class struggle—it received tremendous support from all but a very few business men in the Sudeten area. The employers sacked workers who were not members of the Henlein party, and favoured those who were. They used the threat of dismissal to drive employees into the Henlein party. It was against the law to do so, but the law was almost useless to protect the workers. Few dared to stand up for their legal rights, lest through gaining them something worse should befall. It was, moreover, often extremely difficult to establish to the satisfaction of a court the various forms of pressure exercised by the Sudeten German Party. The victim hesitated to lodge complaints for fear of private reprisals. Still more difficult was it to persuade witnesses to give evidence. Thus even grave cases of terrorism escaped punishment. All the greater significance, therefore, attaches to those cases in which complaints were made to the police, and, above all, to those which resulted in court judgments. Here are two examples of the latter :

On July 18, 1938, the district court at Mährisch-Trubau passed sentence of seven days' imprisonment on Karl Nettek, master-silversmith, of the Franz Bibus & Son silverware factory. Nettek was found guilty of abusing his position to exercise pressure on Social Democratic workers in order to make them join the Sudeten German Party.

On the same day, at the same court, Alfred Schneeweiss, of Uttigsdorf, member of the Sudeten German Party, was sentenced to three days' imprisonment for giving notice to a tenant, Franz Chrometz, on the ground that the latter was a Social Democrat.

In these two cases justice, of a kind, was done. But sentence on employer or landlord did not prevent victimization

of the man who lodged the complaint. Here, for instance, are two cases :

Frant Mautsch, weaver, employed by Franz Pietschmann & Co., Kaiserwalde, complained that S.d.P. posters were pasted on his loom, that the whole workroom was decorated with pictures of Henlein, and that whenever he entered he was greeted with a shout of "*Sieg Heil!*" from the other workers. The owner of the firm was fined and ordered to remove the Henlein pictures—but Mautsch was immediately dismissed.

At Parschnitz a Christian Socialist, Johann Seidel, employed at the Walzel Linen Thread Works, was continually bullied by two members of the Sudeten German Party, Arthur Kult and Friedrich Köhler. Kult threatened Seidel that if he did not join the Henlein party then the party would take its revenge. Kult drew a knife, and Köhler threw a noose of hemp round Seidel's neck and pulled it. He threatened Seidel with death when "The Day" came. Kult and Köhler were arrested, and summoned before the district court at Jičín. This, however, was no satisfaction to Seidel, since he was subsequently dismissed from the factory.

The usual pretext for dismissing factory workers who were anti-Henlein was insufficiency of work. Here is a typical case, reported by the German Social Democrat Party :

Eduard Reinelt, employed by the Wunder factory for wooden goods at Eichwald, near Teplitz, was dismissed on April 23, 1938. The reason given was lack of work. Nevertheless, eight new workers were engaged shortly afterwards. On July 13, 1938, Reinelt again applied to Wunder's for work. He was rejected. According to Reinelt's statement :

"Herr Kurt Wunder asked me to which organization I belonged. I told him I was a member of the International Association of Metal Workers. Herr Wunder then said I could get no more work with his firm since I was a member of this association."

Conditions were as bad in the big factories as in the small. For instance, at Spiro's, of Krumau, one of the best-known paper-mills in Europe, the employees were 100 per cent. Henleinist. Similarly at Schicht's, the big soapworks at

Aussig-on-the-Elbe, where the administrative and clerical staff was overwhelmingly Henleinist, it was practically impossible for a Social Democrat worker to get a job. We shall have more to say about Schicht's when the financing of the Henlein party is discussed.

So numerous did complaints become about the pressure exercised by employers that on August 17, 1938, the state police in Reichenberg issued a warning that :

. . . sentence of imprisonment up to three months and fines up to 5000 Kč [about £35] can be imposed on employers who force their employees to change their political support, to disown their nationality, or to join any particular political party, or who force employees to send their children to schools giving instruction in a particular language.

Pressure by employers was perhaps the most efficient form of intimidation available to the Sudeten German Party, but almost equally good was that exercised by house-owners and landlords on their tenants. I have records of dozens of cases of individuals being turned out of lodgings, of organizations being refused the hire of halls, even of peasants not being allowed to use barns, simply because the persons or organizations concerned were opposed to the Sudeten German Party.

Other Forms of Pressure. — 'Whisper propaganda,' printed attacks, pressure by employers and landlords—this does not by any means exhaust the forms of coercion open to the Sudeten German Party. Apart from these, we may note the following forms of pressure :

1. By teachers in the schools.
2. Commercial boycott.
3. Interference with the activities of non-Henleinist parties.
4. Organized violence and rowdiness.

1. *By Teachers in the Schools.*—The schools in Czechoslovakia are controlled by the State. The teachers are State employees, but this did not prevent many who were of German nationality from disloyal activities. A very large proportion of teachers in the Sudeten country belonged to the Henlein party, which, like the Nazi Party in Germany, and, indeed, like all pseudo-radical but non-socialist parties, had a

NAZI PROPAGANDA METHODS

particular attraction for middle-class professional people and State employees. In the Sudeten country the teachers made full use of their opportunity to influence the children, who, indeed, were made politically conscious to an extent that would excite amazement in England. It became nothing unusual for children to sing insulting S.d.P. doggerel verses about the Czechoslovak Republic, or the S.d.P. version of the Nazi song *Heute gehört uns Deutschland*. A favourite occupation of the S.d.P. children was the bullying and 'ragging' of those who were not Henleinist, or whose parents were not. The parents seldom dared to make any protest, lest this should only make things worse. If they did so a Henleinist teacher could always declare that he had not noticed the alleged bullying, or give an empty promise that it should not happen again.

The children who suffered most were naturally those whose parents were officials of the democratic trade unions or parties. For this reason there were numerous cases of Germans who preferred to send their children to Czechoslovak schools. Even this, however, was not always possible. Here, for example, is a case reported to me :

Josef Pöpperl, a mason employed by the Metternich Forest Administration at Bad Königswart, father of nine children, sent those of them who were of school age to a Czechoslovak school, although he was himself a German. Pöpperl was asked by his employers to send his children to a German school. He refused to do so, and was promptly dismissed, being also turned out of his lodgings.

Another means of getting at the children was through their athletic societies, as evidence for which we may quote the following letter sent out by the Henleinist "Deutsche Turn- und Sportgemeinde," at Reichenau. The letter reads :

GERMAN GYMNASTICS AND SPORTS UNION
REICHENAU
GABLONZ

COMRADES,

Our propaganda work will come to an end on June 19, 1938. Young men and women who are not with us by this day will no longer be considered as national Germans. All

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

connexion with these young men and women is therefore to be broken off.

On June 20 membership will be closed until further notice to all young sportsmen and sportswomen.

As a finish to the propaganda campaign a census of youth has been arranged. You are expected to perform this last great task in this working year with the most meticulous punctuality and conscientiousness.

On this census depends whether we shall be able in the next working year to support our claims for self-administration with the necessary pressure.

FRANZ KRAUTZBERGER

2. *Commercial Boycott.*—The commercial boycott was a particularly powerful weapon in the hands of the Sudeten German Party. How did the boycott work? Very simply, as in these examples :

Butchers in Petlarn were told by the S.d.P. not to buy cattle for slaughtering from non-Henleinist farmers. Dairies were ordered to take their supplies of milk, butter, and eggs only from Henleinist farmers.

Herr Kraus, the owner of a brickyard at Jechnitz, was told by the S.d.P. that the local Henleinist farmers would order no bricks from him unless he replaced his non-Henleinist workers by party members. Herr Kraus did as he was told.

In Fischern, a suburb of Karlsbad, a leaflet was distributed by the S.d.P. calling for the boycott of a local dairy. The leaflet read as follows :

GERMANS, TAKE NOTICE !

The Baumgartl dairy, opposite the Brown House, is a disguised Jewish-Communist centre. Baumgartl uses Czech milk which is delivered to him by the Red Defence leader Josef Grüner. Baumgartl himself is a Communist, but pretends to credulous people to be a supporter of the Henlein party.

Germans ! Buy only German milk from German shops !
Boycott Baumgartl and his associates !

In fact, Baumgartl, far from being a Communist, was a member of the German Social Democrat Party—the leaders

of which were at that time engaged in grave discussions with Lord Runciman. Baumgartl had been subjected to continual persecution because he would not join the S.d.P., which had resulted in his business declining, and thus in the death of one of his children, because he had not been able to pay for adequate medical attention. On August 28, 1938, police raided the S.d.P. headquarters and carried away several bundles of the boycott leaflets.

Outside non-Henleinist shops, whether German, Jewish, or Czech, frequently stood members of the Sudeten German Party, who accosted every one who entered with the order that they should buy only from 'German' shops—*i.e.*, shops which were in the good books of the S.d.P. These pickets were often provided with cameras for the purpose of recording customers of shops which it was desired to boycott. At Asch, Henlein's home-town, during August 1938 uniformed 'stewards' of the S.d.P. acted as pickets outside the branch establishments of Bata, the famous shoe firm, and of Rolny and Sbor, two well-known Czechoslovak cheap tailoring and outfitting firms.

In Reichenberg officials of the "Deutscher Handelsgeshilfenverband," the "Union of Commercial Employees"—controlled by the S.d.P.—visited Jewish firms and urged them to employ only members of this union, as otherwise they would be boycotted.

Jewish shops were plastered with labels reading, "Don't buy from Jews!"

The "Verband zum Studium und zur Förderung der Volkswirtschaft" ("Alliance for the Study and Promotion of National Economy") of Teplitz published a 23-page list of firms classified by the S.d.P. as "Aryan and German." The firms in the list were recommended to party members for their custom. The inevitable effect would be the boycott of the firms not in the list.

As an example of how every possible method of pressure was used to ruin a man's business I give in full a case which was described in a letter sent by the man concerned to Lord Runciman in August 1938. The man was Herr Josef Jantsch, owner of the bookshop Dr Treister & Co.,

Färbergasse 21, Reichenberg. His letter to Lord Runciman is as follows :

Ever since the existence of the Sudeten German Party my business has excited its liveliest interest. I am, therefore, a 'typical case.' As owner of the only democratic and independent book-store in the Sudeten German area I wish—in order to eliminate future doubts—to give first a personal account of myself.

My family tree is one of the oldest and longest proofs of 'Aryan' and German origin. For my part this fact is of no importance, but near relations, who hold important posts in the Third Reich, have taken the trouble to have this matter 'scientifically' investigated. Like almost all members of the Sudeten German population, I am able to speak only one language—that is, German. I was educated as a good German, the closest friends of my childhood are to-day leading officials in the S.d.P. A critical attitude to life and the hard struggle for daily bread led me, however, into the camp of progressive men.

As a progressive German I have, for the past three years, managed a book-store in Reichenberg to the best of my ability and conscience, and in complete independence of any political creed. This has resulted in my shop becoming one of the most hotly disputed subjects in the district.

Friendly advice from S.d.P. circles has alternated with violent threats. Both methods did not convince me that these people possessed the means of harming a private business more than could be done by commonplace whispered propaganda. But I was wrong.

In the autumn of last year I received a definite demand either to change over politically or to close the shop and leave Reichenberg—otherwise they would use compulsion. I attached no importance to these statements. In the middle of December my biggest supplier in Germany broke off a business connexion which had existed for years. Other firms followed this example. One firm wrote on January 14, 1938 : "Referring to your repeated orders, we must decline any business connexion with you for reasons that will be known to you. We are, with German greetings, etc. . . ."

From the threats of S.d.P. functionaries I concluded that they had received from headquarters instructions which gravely endangered the existence of my business. Nevertheless, they could not force me to close my shop. Then came a local campaign that was intended to make life difficult

NAZI PROPAGANDA METHODS

for us. Almost every day our stock was spat upon. Several times excrement was deposited on the doorstep.

In the New Year agitation against me was begun in the Press. The periodical *Der Kamerad* provided the slogan. I enclose a cutting from this paper which almost openly demands a *pogrom*. Now followed the interesting circumstance that, although by Czechoslovak law the paper had to publish my correction, none the less prosecution was impossible because the responsible editor could not be found. The brave man had fled to Germany, as his offences had become too numerous.

My Lord, I ask you, is this case I have described—which is typical of the Sudeten German area—a case of terrorization?

Do you believe that people who are year after year exposed to such pressure really do, from their own conviction, become supporters of this attitude to the extent of 90 per cent.?

Are not, in fact, the true representatives of the Sudeten German people to be found in the 10 per cent. who courageously sacrifice their means of existence, and even their life, for their beliefs?

I beg of you, since you have been described to us as a liberal citizen of a democratic country, to investigate the truth of my statements—not in my interests only, but because I am speaking for many who no longer have the courage to give full publicity to their troubles.

Yours faithfully,
JOSEF JANTSCH

Reichenberg,
Färbergasse 21

Finally, I mention the case of a Jewish doctor, personally known to me, in Warnsdorf, in Northern Bohemia. This doctor, a specialist on diseases of the eye resulting from malnutrition, had established a clinic there out of his own savings, and was known throughout the town. Thanks to the Sudeten German Party, his patients left him. People he had cured, had known for years, ceased to greet him in the street. In September 1938 he was obliged to flee, with his wife, to escape actual physical violence. He lives now with relatives in Yugoslavia, with no chance to practise, his home gone, his valuable surgical instruments lost—a lifetime's work ruined by the activities of the Henlein party.

3. *Interference with the Activities of non-Henleinist Parties.*—Under this heading may be put attempts to prevent other

parties holding meetings, to prevent candidates standing for election, to keep voters away from the polling-booths.

As an illustration of the first : The German Social Democrat Party had called an election meeting for Saturday, June 11, 1938, the eve of the last instalment of the municipal elections, at the Fröhlich Hall in Mährisch-Schönberg. It was announced that Wenzel Jaksch, the party leader, would speak. An hour before the meeting was due to start a crowd of 350 S.d.P. members attempted to climb into the building through the windows, and, by filling the hall, prevent the meeting being held. Police had to be summoned to clear the Henleinists out of the building.

Another case : In Tachau, May 26, 1938, three days before the May 29 polling, the Social Democrats had arranged for a meeting. By 6.30 the streets around the meeting hall were so packed with Sudeten German Party members that anyone who wished to attend the Socialist meeting had to fight his way through the crowd. Social Democrats were followed about the streets by gangs of S.d.P. members and escorted to the doors of their houses.

At Ober-Maxdorf, near Gablonz, S.d.P. members filled up the rooms of an inn where a Communist meeting was to have been held on the day before the elections.

At Weissbach, a village in the Iser Mountains, wires were strung across the street leading to an anti-Henlein meeting, and broken glass was scattered in the roadway.

Anti-Henleinist Germans were prevented from standing for election by various forms of pressure. In the first place, it must be remembered that the S.d.P. had, by local standards, enormous campaigning funds. In comparison, the Social Democrats, and still more the Czechoslovak Communist Party, were almost penniless. Further, business men and professional people, as we have already mentioned, were almost entirely pro-Henlein. These were the people with time and money to take part in local politics. A party of working-men is inevitably handicapped against such opponents. For example, at Wernersreuth, near Asch, the Social Democrats obtained 218 votes in the May municipal elections. This entitled them to five seats on the local council.

NAZI PROPAGANDA METHODS

They were unable to claim all of them, however, because in the district only three men could be found who could afford to stand for the Social Democrat Party without risking the loss of their livelihoods.

It was often impossible to get any candidates at all for the anti-Henlein parties, owing to peculiarities of the Czechoslovak electoral system. Under this system candidates do not stand as individuals, but as names on a list of this or that party. That is to say, it is the list for which votes are given on polling-day. But before a list can be put up for election it has to prove a minimum number of supporters, whose names are published, in accordance with the electoral law. Since the various forms of persecution practised by the S.d.P. made life miserable for opponents of the party, in village after village it was impossible to obtain the necessary number of supporting signatures for the anti-Henlein parties, because even those who in a secret vote would have voted against the S.d.P. did not dare openly to proclaim their opposition.

The difficulties which Social Democrat candidates had to encounter is illustrated by the case of Herr Franz Plotz, Secretary of the German Social Democrat local organization in Triebitz, near Landskron, who was to have headed his party's list at the May elections. Herr Plotz had leased an acre or so of land from a certain Alois Lienert, farmer. The latter informed Frau Plotz that if her husband insisted on standing for election he, Lienert, would withdraw the leased plot of land. Frau Plotz, as expected, was alarmed, and duly persuaded her husband to cancel his candidature.

All the methods of terrorization which have been outlined above were used to prevent Socialist or Communist candidates standing for election. In Böhmisches-Leipa the Social Democrats were so threatened that candidature became impossible. Local printers were 'got at,' and refused to print posters or bills for the Socialists. Every possible kind of social and psychological pressure was applied.

When, despite all these obstacles, Socialist or Communist candidates did stand for election the S.d.P. applied all its ingenuity to keeping voters away from the polling-booths. At Josefstal, near Gablonz, on polling-day uniformed

'stewards' surrounded the polling-station, formed a lane of young men shouting "*Sieg Heil!*" to every voter as he, necessarily, passed between the ranks up to the polling-station. Anyone known locally as anti-Henlein would need unusual courage to face such a demonstration. At Tachau on voting day S.d.P. members, stationed outside the polling-booths, hissed and groaned whenever anyone known as a Social Democrat went in to vote. Rumours were put about that perforations or other marks on the voting papers would enable the Sudeten German Party to know who were the "traitors to the German nation." Naturally the rumours had no basis whatever—the Czechoslovak authorities conducted the elections with complete assurance of the secrecy of the vote—but in small villages, where many of the voters were peasants and simple working people, it was easy to frighten them into believing that the S.d.P. would know how they voted.

The panic fear of being suspected as anti-Henlein which affected the population in many places is indicated by the several cases which occurred of voters trying to obtain evidence that they had voted for Henlein. At Schmiedeberg, for instance, on May 29 one voter demanded that the election committee should provide two witnesses that he had voted for the S.d.P. The man refused to vote secretly because he said that at the factory where he worked he was suspected of being a Socialist.

At Hirschenstand, a little town near the German frontier, a farmer, Franz Rotter, who had been a functionary of the Christian Socialist Party before its amalgamation with the S.d.P., inserted into the ballot box, along with his vote for Henlein, a note saying: "In order to protect myself from even more unreasonable slander, I am induced to prove herewith that I will not betray my faith or my nation."

Enough instances have been given of the kind of methods used by the Sudeten German Party to make fair political contests impossible. Anyone who takes the trouble to go through the files of the local newspapers of the Sudeten area can find dozens more such instances. In addition to the various forms of intimidation described the Sudeten German Party could, owing to its superior financial resources, use all

NAZI PROPAGANDA METHODS

the ordinary forms of propaganda to an extent which was impossible for its opponents. It organized innumerable public demonstrations, with the utmost possible amount of shouting, singing, marching, flag-waving, illuminations, and so forth, such as would give the impression of a conquering army on the march. It had more motor-cyclists, more motor-cars, more and better posters than any other party. In all this it had behind it both the financial resources and the political propaganda experts of the Third Reich.

4. *Organized violence and rowdyism.*—Finally, the Henleinists made use of plain, unconcealed violence to terrify opposition out of existence. Since this was peculiarly the province of the F.S. ("Freiwilliger Schutzdienst," or "Voluntary Defence Service," a subsidiary formation of the S.d.P., which ultimately played a highly important part in the final crisis ¹) it will be best to devote the next chapter to this subject.

¹ It was the rioting and fighting organized by the F.S. which obliged the Czechoslovak authorities to impose martial law on the Sudeten Germans in September 1938.

CHAPTER V

THE ORGANIZATION OF DISORDER

(i) HENLEIN'S STORM TROOPS

THE Sudeten German Party had possessed since its establishment a so-called 'steward service' consisting of young men from the "Deutsche Turnverband" ("German Gymnastic Association"), in which Henlein was once an instructor. But the official formation of these 'stewards' into a close copy of the Reich German Storm Troops and S.S. dates from May 14, 1938—the date on which Henlein was giving assurances in London of his peaceful intentions. On May 14 there appeared in Henlein's weekly paper, *Die Rundschau*, a "Decree for the Formation of the F.S." (Freiwilliger Schutzdienst). This proclamation said :

Konrad Henlein has promoted the soldierly laws of the front to be the laws of the nation in battle. In the F.S. the Sudeten Germans obtain that determined fighting troop which is active wherever a decisive part is played by courage and discipline, by order and the fighting spirit, by loyalty of followers and determination of leaders. What will be demanded of the men of the Defence Service will exceed in hardness of training and service all previous efforts. The F.S. is not a parade troop, but a fighting body always on duty. For the F.S. man the strictest laws alone are good enough. The F.S. man carries the sharp-edged sword of the movement. The F.S. man fights mercilessly and in singleness of purpose against disruption and the disturbers of unity.

The proclamation was signed by Willi Brandner as "Chief of Staff" of the F.S.

The long-suffering Ministry of the Interior ordered this proclamation to be confiscated, and banned the title of "Chief of Staff" as being a military designation, but otherwise took no action against the F.S.

The purpose for which the F.S. was formed was given

THE ORGANIZATION OF DISORDER

out to be the preservation of order at meetings of the Sudeten German Party and elsewhere, such as in the streets when an S.d.P. procession was in progress. In fact, this duty, which in any case should have been purely a matter for the police, was but a small part of the activities of the F.S. Indeed it would not be an exaggeration to say that the real task of the F.S. was the creation of disorder. One of the first things it did immediately after its formation was to attack the offices of the Karlsbad Communist paper, the *Westböhmisches Rote Fahne*. Windows were broken, and the owner of the building was threatened by letter, with the result that he felt obliged to give the paper's staff notice to leave the rooms they had rented. On May 18 a gang of forty or fifty F.S. men chased a Czech railway employee into the Masaryk Barracks at Komotau, assembled 300 reinforcements, and threatened to enter the barracks to get at their intended victim. The F.S. did not disperse until Czech soldiers armed with a machine-gun appeared.

One of the main occupations of the F.S. was the provocation of clashes with non-Henlein Germans or with the State police, in order to create the impression that the Czechoslovak authorities could not keep order. At Chodau, for instance, on May 20, following the arrest of an F.S. man, several hundred of his colleagues arrived in motor-cars and on motor-cycles and assembled in the market-place, refusing to obey orders from the *gendarmérie* to disperse. The latter proceeded to use force to clear the market-place. One gendarme was knocked down and trampled on and two others were injured. Another then fired a shot into the air with his revolver. The crowd melted away at that, and three S.d.P. members were arrested. F.S. men then scouted round the local factories and shops ordering that work should be stopped, because "they are shooting in the market-place!" Herr Wollner, a Sudeten German Party deputy, conveniently arrived, telephoned to the Home Office in Prague, and obtained the release of the three prisoners.

At Zwickau and Bensen, in North Bohemia, on the night before the municipal elections on May 29 F.S. men went

round tearing down all the election posters of the anti-Henlein parties. All through the election campaign F.S. troops were constantly on the march, standing about in the streets, molesting Social Democrats, Czechs, and Jews. At Zwickau they surrounded the local co-operative society building during a meeting of working-class members who were doing election work. The same thing was done at Ober-Maxdorf. Members of working-class athletic clubs and other organizations were constantly set upon and beaten up on their way to and from meetings. So serious did this sort of thing become that one such body, the Atus Union, issued a public statement on July 19, 1938. It declared that members had been attacked and injured on their way to a sports meeting in Pilsen, and added :

We indignantly oppose this "non-German culture" and the use of such Storm Troop methods, and urge our members to use every means of self-help in defence. Every attempt at molestation by the Sudeten Nazis, even the slightest, is to be reported immediately to the State police and to the management of the Association. The latter will do everything possible to prevent the continuance of these goings-on by the Nazi heroes.

During the days before the mobilization of May 21 the F.S. troops were particularly in evidence. They staged many parades and made various attempts to take upon themselves the duty of controlling the general public. At Eger, for example, children playing in the street were ordered by F.S. men to go home. The father of the children pointed out to the F.S. that it was for him to decide whether the children should go home or not. The man was thereupon ordered to give his name and address, and even threatened with arrest by the F.S. !

Numerous cases of this kind finally obliged the Czechoslovak authorities to issue a statement on May 24 pointing out that no civil or gymnastic association could take upon itself the duty of keeping order, this being exclusively a matter for the official organizations—police, *gendarmérie*, and military.

Towards the end of August and the beginning of Septem-

ber disturbances and terrorization of the Sudeten population became much more serious. Details will be given in their appropriate place in this history. It was the F.S. which was largely responsible that—as even Lord Runciman admitted in his letter to the Prime Minister—"incidents were provoked and instigated on the 11th September, and, with even greater effect after Hitler's speech, on the 12th September." Some indication has, however, now been given of the kind of activity carried on by the Sudeten German Party's "fighting body always on duty."

From Henlein's point of view the F.S. were the most reliable body of supporters he had. The members were all picked men, and, like the S.S. (Black Guards) in Germany, constituted a militarized party formation.

In addition to organizing a terror in the Sudeten areas the F.S. made preparations to help the German army in the event of war against Czechoslovakia. They were to be the equivalent of General Franco's wreckers and *saboteurs* in Madrid, who were to stab the Government in the back. The F.S. themselves believed that the problem of German-Czechoslovak relations was only to be solved by force, and they made their dispositions accordingly. They collected arms which were smuggled in from Germany, they made plans for stopping Czechoslovak reinforcements from getting from the interior of the country to the frontiers, they made 'black lists' of Czechs and anti-Henlein Germans in the Sudeten country who were to be "dealt with" on "The Day."¹

In Prague, which, along with Brno (Brünn) and Moravská Ostrava (Mährisch-Ostrau), was considered one of the most important F.S. centres, the organization had rifles and machine-guns concealed in the German University building,

¹ On June 26, 1938, a number of Sudeten German Party members were arrested on a charge of conspiring against German and Czech democrats in the Sudeten territory. At Reichenberg the police discovered a plan for action against 1200 listed anti-Henleinists.

On August 16 an official of the Amalia-III coal-mine at Bilina, near Brüx, was arrested after he had handed to a functionary of the S.d.P. a list of the democratic German and Czech workers employed at the mine. Franz Drescher, local leader of the S.d.P. at Bilina, was also arrested.

which, since it enjoyed autonomous German—and S.d.P.—administration, was almost immune from Czech visitations. F.S. men were said to have painted the name of the capital with luminous paint on the roof of the university building as a guide to the German bombing 'planes. Acting under instructions from the F.S., doctors at the German medical school in Prague were reported to have prepared thousands of typhoid cultures for use in bacteriological warfare against the Czechs.

During the spring and summer of 1938 the Czechoslovak police arrested dozens of Sudeten German arms-smugglers. The cases revealed to the public in the newspapers were only a fraction of the total. Many were suppressed by the censorship because the authorities did not wish the S.d.P. to realize too clearly that their arms-smuggling was well under observation—which, indeed, they did not realize until the last moment.

Nevertheless, the *Prager Presse*, semi-official Government organ, published on August 13, 1938, the following brief, but highly significant, notice :

The frontier customs guards state that there has been a big increase lately in the smuggling of fire-arms. This is especially the case on the Southern German frontier. At one single frontier station during July no less than 1300 fire-arms were confiscated, the smuggling of which would have meant a loss to the State of 17,000 Kč. [about £120].

I do not know how many frontier posts there were along the excessively lengthy frontiers of Czechoslovakia, but the total must certainly have run into hundreds. If the 1300 weapons confiscated in one month by one frontier post were an average sample then the total amount of smuggling done must have been enormous. A typical case became known on August 18 at Moravská Ostrava. In the Freiwaldau district police and *gendarmérie* held up a motor-lorry coming into Czechoslovakia from Germany. The driver and his companion stated that they were carrying a consignment of paraffin. The frontier guards, however, had suspicions about that paraffin. They opened the cans. Inside were 200 automatics with ammunition.

THE ORGANIZATION OF DISORDER

During the next few weeks the number of seizures of smuggled arms increased, and by September 7 no less than eighty-two Sudeten Germans in the Moravská Ostrava region alone had been arrested on arms-smuggling charges.

The fact that the Sudeten German Party took the risk of assembling its illegal arsenals is a certain degree of proof that it never expected a peaceful solution of the minorities problem within the limits of the Czechoslovak Constitution. The arsenals were, too, an indication of the confidence the S.d.P. had in its private information about British policy. The Henleinists always believed, and acted on the belief, that Mr Chamberlain, anxious not to see the Nazi *régime* overturned and possibly replaced by a Bolshevik one, was supporting Hitler on the quiet, and only saying the contrary for the sake of British public opinion. It is hard to prove now that the Henleinists were badly informed.

The exact numerical strength of the F.S. is difficult to state. A basis is, however, available for an estimate. In Asch, for instance, a town of 24,000 inhabitants, there were about 500 members of the F.S. In a remote hamlet like Gottmannsgrün there were 11 F.S. men to a population of 800. The proportion of F.S. to population in these two places, which typify the biggest and smallest units of population in the Sudeten area, is then, respectively, a little over 2 per cent. and just under 1.5 per cent. Asch, as Henlein's home-town, and one of the main centres of the Sudeten German Party, would, however, have a higher proportion of F.S. men than, for instance, places in South Bohemia or in Moravia.

Against this must be put the fact that it was the more thickly populated regions of West and North Bohemia which were the most fanatically Henleinist, and places like Eger, Karlsbad, Marienbad, Warnsdorf, Rumburg, Reichenberg, would all supply a quota of F.S. men big enough to compensate for the smaller numbers from the other less enthusiastically Henleinist centres. If, then, we took 2 per cent. as representing the proportion of F.S. to German population we might not be far wrong. This would give,

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

on the basis of the $3\frac{1}{4}$ million Germans in Czechoslovakia, an F.S. membership of 65,000.

At first sight this seems a big figure. Let us compare it with the number of ordinary members of the S.d.P. Herr Köllner, chief organizer of the party, speaking at the Karlsbad Party Congress on April 24, 1938, stated that on that date there were over 800,000 organized party members.¹ 40 per cent. of members, however, were women—*i.e.*, about 320,000—leaving 480,000 male members. If we take the estimated figure of 65,000 for the F.S. it means that the latter organization was equal to something more than 13 per cent. of the ordinary masculine party membership. Is this too high a proportion? Possibly a little too high, but not very much. The total number of F.S. must have been in the neighbourhood of 50,000 to 60,000 men. This number, it must be remembered, was distributed throughout the Sudeten country, and their activities were variously apportioned.

Candidates for the F.S. had to pass a medical examination before being admitted, of the same kind as was usual for military service. They had also to be absolutely sound from the S.d.P. political point of view. Most of the F.S. were tough, middle-class, young men, sons of farmers, independent craftsmen and shopkeepers, officials and professional men. Most were members of the German Gymnastic Association.

F.S. men had to attend drill and political lectures once or twice a week. At week-ends they had route marches, or acted as stewards at meetings and demonstrations.

¹ Herr Köllner gave the following particulars of party membership and organization: After the *Anschluss* 212,000 new members were admitted in March 1938, bringing the total to 770,000, which represented 26 per cent. of all Sudeten Germans. At the time of speaking there were "more than 800,000 organized, active members." On March 31 the party machinery comprised 140 district organizations and 3662 local groups. Average membership of each local group was about 100 in 1936, 150 in 1937, and 210 in 1938. Fifty local groups numbered over 2000, and three of them—in Gablonz, Karlsbad, and Reichenberg—totalled over 10,000. The organization was worked by 75,000 functionaries (*Amtswalter*) distributed over territories which ranged in size from the smallest—'neighbourhoods'—through parishes, 'comradships,' and local groups to districts and provinces.

THE ORGANIZATION OF DISORDER

They provided a bodyguard for Henlein and other S.d.P. leaders. They formed cordons to control crowds—and they undertook the provocation and terrorization already described.

A description was given to me at the end of June 1938 by a non-Henlein German of a midnight muster of the F.S. summoned by the district headquarters of the Sudeten German Party at Bensen, an industrial town in North Bohemia. The meeting described was apparently one of the first of a new detachment of the F.S. In charge were a doctor—responsible for the medical examination—and a reserve officer. The young men were told that the F.S. was divided into three sections :

1. F.S./A. Men to be trained in the Sudeten Legion in Germany. They were to be got over the frontier on pretext of seeking work in Germany. Only the most reliable, politically and militarily, would go into this class. They would be used as couriers and patrols, in espionage and so forth. The best men of this section would also be trained in the use of machine-guns and hand-grenades.

2. F.S./B. Men in this class were engaged on organizing work, arranging and managing meetings, demonstrations, etc., acting as stewards and private police.

3. F.S./C. This section was devoted to propaganda. Members were also told that they were expected to train, by sports and gymnastics, so as to be capable of long marches.

In August it was noticed in the Sudeten area that large numbers of the F.S. had suddenly been provided with motor-cycles, and that courier work, by night as well as by day, was being carried out on a much bigger scale than formerly. F.S. men were also constantly on duty, day and night, in the offices of the Sudeten German Party. Like the S.S. in Germany, F.S. men were paid. They got 20 Kč (nearly 3s.) a day, and 30 Kč (4s. 3d.) for night duty. Headquarters of the F.S. were in Asch. The body had its own periodical, *Mannschaft im Kampf* (approximately *The Fighting Ranks*), the first number of which was published in Asch in the first week of August.

The duties of the F.S. so far described by no means exhausted the uses to which this organization was put. Its big value to the Reich was as an espionage force which naturally knew, or could more easily get to know, far more about conditions in its own homeland than could Reich German agents sent from outside. At the same time the Reich did not leave the F.S. unsupervised. If it provided the money it was also determined to get full value, and to exercise control. Members of the Gestapo were accordingly sent into Czechoslovakia, sometimes openly as Reich Germans, sometimes with faked Czechoslovak passports.

In August 1938 I was told by a high official in the Vice-Premier's office that the Czechoslovak police had the names and addresses of some 7000 Gestapo men who were or had been in Czechoslovakia. In Prague the headquarters for the Gestapo were the offices of the Sudeten German Party, at No. 4 Hybernská. The "Deutsches Haus," previously mentioned, and the offices in the capital of other German organizations were also used. The Czechs also naturally considered the German Legation, No. 16 Thunovská—only a few yards from the British Legation—as being by no means above suspicion. In Czechoslovakia one of the tasks of the Gestapo was, as in the Reich, keeping track of all opponents of Nazi-ism, especially of Socialists and Communists. Elaborate records were compiled, complete with photographs and notes of anti-Nazi remarks made in *cafés*, factories, trams, and other public places. As a corollary to this the Gestapo also watched the activities of German *émigrés* in Czechoslovakia. Finally, the Gestapo was engaged in ordinary military espionage. In all these tasks the Reich German agents were immensely helped by the local knowledge of the Sudeten German Party members, and especially by the F.S. men.

As a documentary illustration of the kind of work the F.S. were engaged upon and the way it was carried out, it is worth giving a confidential instructions sheet sent out to all F.S. men on July 24, 1938. The paper came into the hands of non-Henlein Germans, and is here translated exactly as set out in the original. I can vouch for the

THE ORGANIZATION OF DISORDER

enuineness of this document, which is, in itself, an admirable piece of evidence of the amazing organization which the S.d.P. had built up : The document reads :

DISTRICT OFFICE III (TRAUTENAU)
OF THE
SUDETEN GERMAN PARTY

TRAUTENAU
July 24, 1938

DISTRICT INSTRUCTIONS OG—9.38

Strictly confidential !

- (1) All instructions and reports are until further notice to be treated as strictly confidential. News, inquiries, etc., are to be forwarded only by courier (F.S./A.). Post and telephone strictly forbidden.
- (2) F.S. reports by classification under columns. Drills are to be sent in regularly and punctually.
- (3) Membership cards of comrades going to Germany for work are to be given, besides the usual note, a serial number which must be communicated to us for control purposes.
- (4) During August squad roll-calls of the F.S. are to be held everywhere. Reports on work in factories, on calling up for special military training, strengthening of *gendarmérie* and State police. Occurrences to persons suspected of being confidants in offices or parties.
- (5) Public meetings are to be avoided for the present, but instead § 2 meetings are to be held everywhere, in accordance with Instructions 7 and 8.
- (6) For the month of August rallies according to § 2 are to be summoned by the B./Training Leaders, as instructors will be sent to District III from Eger.
- (7) Reports on the activities of the Republican Defence and the Red Defence.

We demand from all comrades intensive and exact work, as the months of August and September will be of great importance to us, and from them will depend the success of all campaigns.

With German greeting,

F. HAAR, M.P.

K. HOFHANSEL, M.P.
District Leader

Heil Henlein !

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

This quasi-military document, it should be noted, originated from the offices of a party which claimed that the Germans in Czechoslovakia suffered from intolerable 'oppression' and denial of their natural rights.

An indication of the kind of military discipline enforced in the S.d.P. is given in another confidential party document, headed :

INSTRUCTIONS OF THE CHIEF ORGANIZATION OFFICE, B. 29/38.

EGER,

July 12, 1938

Re EXAMINATION OF THE ORGANIZATION

This document reads in part :

On August 20 or 21 in all local groups of all districts sudden roll-calls of party functionaries are to be held. The manner in which they are carried out can be extended or intensified by the District Leaders. The time of the roll-calls will be communicated to the Local Leaders by motor-cyclist on the evening before.

These roll-calls were to be conducted in accordance with a prescribed ritual, for which were given the following special instructions :

The Local Leader calls in his functionaries. When the superior Leader or his deputy arrives he then gives the command "Attention !" takes several paces forward towards his superior, greets with the raised hand, and announces the number of functionaries present as well as those who are absent or who have sent excuses. The District Leader will then thank him, give the command "At ease !" and will greet each functionary with a handshake.

All this, it must be realized, does not refer to the semi-militarized F.S., but to the ordinary officials of the Sudeten German Party.

The terrorist activities of the S.d.P., and more especially of the F.S. organization, received little check from the State authorities. The Czechs were so anxious to avoid incidents that the police were given strict instructions to proceed as leniently as possible against the Henleinists. This was done, partly in deference to the recommendations of Britain and

France, and partly because certain Agrarians in the Czechoslovak Government and administration coquetted with the S.d.P., with the idea that its support might be useful against the Czechoslovak Socialist parties. Right until the last moment these Agrarians did not seem to realize how fierce was the fire with which they were playing. The leniency towards the Henleinists drew many bitter complaints from democratic Germans, who at the end of August were saying that it was not safe for a Social Democrat or a Communist to go out at night in the Sudeten towns and villages.

In the previous chapter an account was given of the Reich German propaganda campaign against Czechoslovakia during 1936-37. The same kind of atrocity stories continued to be perpetrated throughout 1938, even during Lord Runciman's mission, despite the British Government's appeal that the campaign should be stopped. To provide material for this propaganda was one of the duties of the Sudeten German Party. One atrocity story so supplied—namely, that the Sudeten Germans were forced to eat dogs and cats—was so revolting and outrageous that it was too much even for Czech patience. A police inquiry was made, and the details revealed were hardly a tribute to the scrupulousness of the German Press.

On June 15 the German illustrated weekly *Die Woche* published a four-page illustrated article purporting to portray conditions in the Erzgebirge district of Czechoslovakia. The article, entitled "We accuse!" alleged that "Germans have to feed on rats, cats, and dogs," and that Germans were "driven mad by hunger."

From the inquiry made by the State police at Graslitz it appeared that the article and the illustrations were obtained in the following way:

On May 11 two Reich German journalists, Hans Wagner and Ludwig Hoffenreich, came to Graslitz from Karlsbad in a motor-car belonging to the Karlsbad office of the Sudeten German Party. In Graslitz they went to Max Nier, a functionary of the S.d.P., later elected a town councillor. Nier took the two journalists to a certain Anton Leibl, a seventy-year-old, slightly mentally defective knacker known as

"Hundstoni" ("Dog Tony"), who apparently lived by skinning dogs and cats. "Dog Tony" was offered 70 Kč (10s.) by the journalists if he would obtain a dog, slaughter and skin it before them. This the man did; the scene was photographed, and the pictures subsequently appeared in *Die Woche*. In like manner a photograph of a woman who had been epileptic since her childhood was used as "documentary proof" that the Sudeten Germans were driven mad by hunger.

In July Nier was arrested, and was stated by the police to have admitted that the slaughtering of the dog was staged in order to show that Sudeten Germans lived on dogs. Nier's house was searched, and, according to the police, twelve negatives and great quantities of other propaganda material were found.

(ii) SUDETEN GERMAN PARTY FINANCE

It is clear that the activities of the Sudeten German Party must have cost a vast deal of money. Who provided the funds? The answer, briefly, is (a) Germany, and (b) Sudeten Germans themselves—especially Sudeten German business-men. The various ways in which the money was obtained and distributed inside Czechoslovakia are a highly instructive lesson on the financing of revolution.

In the first place, it has to be realized that Reich German money had been coming into Czechoslovakia for propaganda purposes ever since the foundation of the Republic. In the first post-war years the amounts were not large and were used chiefly for "cultural purposes." Chief organizations which worked in this way from Germany were:

- (1) The "Verein für das Deutschtum im Auslande" ("Alliance for Germany Abroad").
- (2) The "Auslands-Institut," of Stuttgart.
- (3) The "Sudetendeutscher Heimatbund" ("Homeland League of Sudeten Germans"), at Dresden, Berlin, and elsewhere.

These organizations, particularly the first and the last—which consisted of exiles from Czechoslovakia who disliked

the new State—collected money and financed Germans in Czechoslovakia to give lectures, keep up contacts with the Reich, and do what propaganda they could. After 1933 these organizations, which, in any case, had always stood for Pan-German ideas, were ‘co-ordinated’ by the Nazi Party, and eventually became State-subsidized institutions. They were, moreover, eagerly and plentifully supported by the State, and their activities, particularly those of the “Auslands-Institut” and the “Verein [after 1933 the “Volksbund”—i.e., “National League”] für das Deutschtum im Auslande,” were greatly developed and extended, because these existing pan-German bodies were the very instruments required to provide the realization of Point 1 in the Nazi programme: the union of all Germans in one Great Germany. After the Nazi *régime* had consolidated its position in Germany and successfully converted every kind of cultural activity into something not very different from propaganda for the Nazi philosophy these so-called cultural organizations were a perfect cloak for aims ultimately political. To Nazi-ism, to perform the Aryan music of Wagner and ignore that of the Jew Mendelssohn is no less a political act than the holding of a public meeting. To the rest of the world such musical discrimination is at the worst prejudice, and, for the most part, merely a matter of æsthetic standards. This division of outlook between Nazi-ism and non-Nazi-ism was precisely the factor which Germany could well exploit. It could conduct propaganda which would leave its mark on Germans, and yet present an air of innocence to the world. One such way in which this was done in Czechoslovakia, for instance, was by the provision of money for private teaching in the German language. This was notably the case in the Hultschin (Hlučín) district round Troppau. In this almost entirely Czechoslovak district of 50,000 people there was a German minority of under 20 per cent. Before the War Hultschin was part of Prussian Silesia, and the Prussians had attempted to Germanize the inhabitants by providing only German schools. Czechoslovakia reversed the process, and after 1935 Czechoslovak schools became compulsory. Private

teaching after school in German was, however, still allowed. At once the "Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Auslande" sent large sums for the provision of German private teachers. A certain amount of money for this purpose had always been available since shortly after the War, but, with the coming of Hitler in Germany, these subsidies multiplied tenfold. The so-called private teaching in German was, of course, nothing but an excuse for Nazi propaganda and agitation. This went so far that the Czechoslovak police had to arrest many teachers for incitement against the State.

In June 1938 the Sudeten German Party conducted a noisy campaign, with the object of bullying parents to take their children away from the Czechoslovak schools and send them to the German schools in Troppau, despite the law that children could only be transferred from a school in one district to that in another if the parents changed their place of residence. A so-called "March on Troppau" was prepared, with S.d.P. deputies leading a parade of parents and children.

Another case of money being supplied by the "Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Auslande" came to light in 1936, when a certain Dr Patscheider, a schoolmaster in Troppau, was tried along with a Dr Lehmann, of Reichenberg, and others on a charge of conspiring against Czechoslovakia in alliance with a foreign Power. A plan for a revolt drafted by one of the accused was found, and other evidence proved that Patscheider and others had received money from the "Volksbund" and similar Reich German organizations. The two chief accused were found guilty and sentenced to terms of two years' imprisonment.

From 1936, when, as we have seen, the Reich campaign against Czechoslovakia really got under way, the flow of money across the frontier steadily mounted. "The availability of propagandistic funds," says Elizabeth Wiskemann, "in spite of Germany's financial difficulties, was very remarkable." The Czechoslovak authorities also thought it was remarkable, and were not under any illusions as to whence it came. To mention only a simple matter, it was clear that Henlein could not make his repeated journeys to

THE ORGANIZATION OF DISORDER

Berlin, Munich, London, and elsewhere unless he had money outside Czechoslovakia. As a Czechoslovak subject Henlein could not take out of the country more than 1000 Kč (about £7) a month without a special permit from the National Bank. Henlein never applied for such a permit. And it is highly unlikely that a person so carefully watched as he was would have risked trouble with the Czechoslovak authorities by currency smuggling.

Again the very scale on which S.d.P. propaganda was conducted was evidence enough that it was not paid for out of membership dues. The sums provided from Germany for the campaign for the municipal elections which were to have been held in November 1937—actually postponed until May and June 1938—were definitely stated by M. Pezet, the Vice-President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the French Chamber of Deputies. As reported by the *Prager Presse* on February 2, 1938, he declared that he had evidence that the Nazi Party headquarters in Munich supplied the S.d.P. with 960,000 Kč (nearly £7000) on September 8, 1937, and with a further 1,088,000 Kč on October 16.

The sums sent from Germany were certainly considerable. On August 30, 1938, a mysterious currency smuggling affair, believed to be connected with the S.d.P., was discovered by the Czechoslovak finance authorities in Karlsbad. A Reich German, who had given rise to suspicions, was arrested, and was found to be carrying with him Reichsmark notes to the value of no less than £20,000.

Smuggling was not, however, the usual way of transferring funds. There were many much safer methods. It was reported, for instance, that securities confiscated from Jews in Vienna were sold on the Prague stock market, and the proceeds handed over to the S.d.P. Another simple way was to use German business firms as the intermediaries. The Nazis would pay a sum into the headquarters of a firm in Germany, and order its Sudeten branch to pay out the money to the S.d.P. in Czechoslovakia. The whole thing was simply a bookkeeping operation. Sudeten German business houses were, in any case, financial supporters of the S.d.P. on a considerable

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

scale. Outstanding in this respect was the firm of Schicht, mentioned in an earlier chapter. There seems no doubt that it contributed no less than 8,000,000 Kč (over £50,000) for equipping and uniforming the F.S. This was published in several newspapers, and was never contradicted. Another report which was never denied was that during the crisis of May 21 arms were found in the Schicht works, in readiness for the S.d.P. should a conflict have broken out.

As the work was passing to press it became apparent that certain personal references in the concluding paragraphs of Chapter V might be resented by the parties concerned, and the Publishers decided to omit this matter.

CHAPTER VI

THE GERMAN PLAN

(i) THE WAR PREPARATIONS IN GERMANY

IN the debate on the Munich Agreement, Lord Lloyd said in the House of Lords, on October 4, as reported by *The Times*, that "he was able to inform the Foreign Secretary in the very early days of August of the whole German plan, worked out to an actual date."

At Godesberg, on September 23, Hitler insisted that the Czechoslovaks must evacuate their fortresses by October 1. Again and again during the negotiations with Mr Chamberlain he insisted on the absolute necessity of a rapid settlement. Why was there this hurry? There is little doubt that the reason was the plan to which Lord Lloyd referred. Delay would have upset the time-table of the German High Command. As Moltke told the Kaiser in August 1914: "The advance of armies formed of millions of men . . . once planned, could not possibly be changed."

Hitler told Sir Horace Wilson in Berlin that the German general mobilization was planned for 2 P.M. on September 28. The German attack on Czechoslovakia would no doubt have begun on October 1.

There is evidence, too, that the plan involved other nations besides those of Europe—that, indeed, a world war might have been in progress within a very few days. According to information given me in very high quarters in Prague, the Czechoslovak Minister in Tokyo was told on September 15 by the British Ambassador there of certain facts which had come to the knowledge of the British Government. These facts, had they become known to the public at the time, would have created a world-wide sensation. In brief, what the British Ambassador said was that, in the event of war in Europe involving Britain, Japan intended

THE GERMAN PLAN

to attack Hong Kong on October 1, and on the same date Italy planned to send her troops in Libya over the frontier into Egypt. It was, in fact, plain that the anti-Comintern triangle of Germany-Japan-Italy could, if necessary, constitute a military alliance. It is possible that the British Government's information on this point was faulty; that the plan for action by Japan and Italy on October 1 would not have been put into effect—that the story of the plan was spread abroad as a piece of bluff; it is possible, too, that the British Ambassador in informing the Czechoslovak Minister exaggerated the danger of Japanese and Italian intervention. None the less, on Government could disregard information of this nature, and it may well have been the final decisive factor in the British Government's considerations.

It is, moreover, significant that on the day before the meeting of the Czechoslovak and British diplomats in Tokyo the Japanese Foreign Office issued a statement saying that "what the Führer demands concerning the Sudeten problem is a solution with justice, for which our nation has nothing but sympathy and admiration." The statement blamed the Comintern for the crisis, and said that Japan was ready to join forces with Germany and Italy in the fight against Red operations. It was emphasized that this definitely meant military operations.¹

In any case, with or without Japan and Italy, it is plain that Germany planned to attempt the seizure of the Sudeten country by force. We have enough direct evidence of that so far as Germany itself is concerned. What must also be realized is that the actions of the Sudeten German Party from June to September 1938 were directed, not towards reaching a settlement, but so as to fit in with the German plan of preparation for a campaign against Czechoslovakia.

¹ It may be noted that in reply to the Opposition motion of no confidence in the Government's foreign policy moved by Mr Dalton in the House of Commons on December 19, 1938, Mr Chamberlain said, "Mr Dalton's policy would have involved us in war simultaneously with *Japan*, Germany, Italy, and General Franco." This was, I believe, the first time that the Prime Minister had mentioned Japan in connexion with the September crisis.

The Henlein party never intended to reach a peaceful compromise ; it had orders not to. Whenever it seemed that a settlement was imminent the S.d.P. raised its terms, or provoked excuses for breaking off negotiations. Even Lord Runciman admitted the dishonesty of the S.d.P. Yet, if Lord Runciman had the information available to the British Government—and it is difficult to suppose that he had not—then he should have fully expected the trickery used by the Henlein party.

As far as the Reich Government were concerned there were only two possibilities for the outcome of the discussions in Prague : either the Czechs accepted all the S.d.P. demands for autonomy, etc., in which case it would only be a matter of weeks before Henlein openly asked Germany to take over the Sudeten territory, or Czechoslovakia refused to yield to the S.d.P., in which case the German army would take what it wanted without being asked. Dr Goebbels, unable, as often before, to resist blurting out the cynical truth, said on June 21 :

We will not look on much longer while 3,500,000 Germans are maltreated. . . . We saw in Austria that one race cannot be separated into two countries. We shall soon see it somewhere else.

The German plan of operations against Czechoslovakia may be said to have begun on May 28. On that date Hitler, according to his own statement, ordered the German army and air-force to be strengthened, and nearly 500,000 workmen to begin the building of 17,000 steel and concrete forts on Germany's western frontiers.

When all this was in preparation it seems a little useless, in retrospect, for the S.d.P. leaders to have been solemnly negotiating with the Czechoslovak Government all through June and July. But to do this, to keep the Czechoslovaks believing in the possibility of a compromise solution while the military preparations were going on in Germany, was all part of the plan. It is interesting to note, for instance, that on this very day of May 28 Dr Hodža received two representatives of the S.d.P., and that both the Government and

the Henleinists issued a most amicable identical *communiqué*. The conversations, begun with Henlein on May 23, it was said, had been continued. There had been a discussion of how conditions in the Sudeten area should be normalized, and an understanding was reached on the continuation of the discussions. The chances of amicable negotiations leading to an amicable settlement did not, in fact, look at all bad.

More significant than any conciliatory words by the S.d.P. leaders was the barrage of hate against the Czechoslovaks maintained day after day by the German Press and radio. A Czechoslovak military weekly, *Branná Politika*, counted no less than 922 attacks on Czechoslovakia by the German radio during the period May 21 to June 21.¹ Finally, much more important than anything in Czechoslovakia was Field-Marshal Goering's decree of June 23, to come into force on July 1, ordering that all workers could be conscripted and taken from their ordinary jobs in order to carry out "tasks of special importance to the State." The special tasks were the fortifications, barracks, landing-grounds, and so forth on the western frontiers, construction of which was not proceeding fast enough if they were to be finished before the winter set in.

On July 5 I called on a friend at the Czechoslovak Foreign Office, and afterwards noted in my diary :

X said that, according to information from the Czechoslovak consuls, etc., in Germany tremendous efforts are being made to get the country ringed round with fortifications, especially in the west, and even including the frontiers with Belgium, Holland, and Switzerland. He said Goering had

¹ "It can hardly be said," declared *Branná Politika*, giving details, "that the German radio neglected to interfere in our internal affairs, as :

- (1) It criticized the Government or the President 194 times ;
- (2) It slandered the good reputation of our officials and courts 172 times ;
- (3) It insulted our army 106 times ;
- (4) It agitated for the Sudeten German Party 336 times ;
- (5) It supported the autonomist demands of the Slovaks and Poles 34 times ;
- (6) It attempted to create the impression that Communists ruled Czechoslovakia 31 times."

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

ordered the work to be completed within six months. It has already been under way some weeks, so should be finished by November.

By the middle of July newspapers all over the world had got on to the story of Germany's fortifications. It was not merely a matter of the 17,000 ferro-concrete forts of which Hitler so proudly spoke. It was a matter of the most thorough preparation in every possible sense. New roads for troop transport were built. One along the Giant Mountains (*Riesengebirge*), which form part of Czechoslovakia's northern frontier, was popularly called the *Sudeten-Strasse*. Railway stations along the German side of the Sudeten frontier were extended. At Seidenberg new tracks and platforms were built. At Nigrisch, Hagenwald, and Zittau new tracks were laid down, and bridges, which might have to carry extra heavy traffic, were carefully surveyed, and, where necessary, strengthened. Hundreds of workers were brought down from North and West Germany, and moved rapidly from one job to another so as to prevent any leakage of information. The Germans even went to the length of arranging Czechoslovak language courses for officers. Something like seventy courses were organized—with teachers from Czechoslovakia—for the garrisons at Plauen, Hof, Chemnitz, Dresden, and other places near the frontier. The business of learning Czechoslovak, despised by the Germans as the "servants' language," was none the less taken seriously, for when the German occupation was carried out Czechoslovak inhabitants of the Sudeten areas were astounded to meet German officers who could speak Czechoslovak!

Another measure was the German espionage flights over Czechoslovakia which were carried out in a big way.

On May 27 Dr Mastný, Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin, was instructed to present Herr von Ribbentrop with a detailed statement of no less than twenty-two flights by German aeroplanes over Czechoslovakia, including one which was sighted over Pilsen, thirty-five miles from the frontier. There were occasions for similar protests all through the summer. On August 7 an official statement was issued in Prague that since May 20 no less than

THE GERMAN PLAN

seventy-four flights had been made by German 'planes over Czechoslovakia.

Parallel with all these military measures went preparations in the economic sphere. Reserve stocks of food and raw materials were piled up in enormous quantities. In the first half of 1938 the import of fodder and foodstuffs was nearly 200,000,000 Reichsmarks (about £16,000,000) higher than in the first half of 1937. The import of raw materials—in particular, cotton, iron ore, zinc ore, lead ore, and crude oil—was 44,000,000 Reichsmarks higher than the previous year. All this, moreover, was in addition to the huge increase of internal production under the Four Year Plan, and despite the shortage of foreign exchange and decreasing exports.

It was clear that Germany was taking no chances in the war that might break out over Czechoslovakia, and was making sure that if, contrary to expectations, the war did become a lengthy business the country would yet be able to stand the strain.

In German economic tactics very noticeable was the clearly evident desire to keep in well with British capitalism, which found expression in the rapidity with which Germany agreed to pay up on the Austrian loans owned by British holders—and guaranteed by the British Government up to a total of about £7,500,000. The agreement was announced by Mr Chamberlain on July 1, exactly one month after the Germans had defaulted on the loan service. There were also certain newspaper articles, such as that in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* of July 5, which praised Mr Chamberlain in a way that even the Conservative Party headquarters could not have bettered.

Along with the military and economic preparations inside Germany went certain economic measures deliberately directed against Czechoslovakia. On June 2 it was learned that the coal from Upper Silesia intended for Austria would not in future be sent by the obvious direct route, straight across Czechoslovakia, but would be sent by the long *détour* via Dresden, Nürnberg, and Passau, thus depriving Czechoslovakia of the transit charges. In

this piece of spite Germany persuaded Poland to give her support, and the same decision was taken regarding coal from Polish Silesia.

The *tempo* of the preparations in Germany accelerated sharply in August. While the S.d.P. was keeping Lord Runciman and the Czechoslovak Government busy with so-called negotiations the German High Command was organizing the mobilization of 1,500,000 men. The chief problem facing the Germans was how to get this huge number of men under arms without attracting too much attention abroad. The problem was solved in a most ingenious fashion.

First, almost the entire frontier regions of Germany were proclaimed "prohibited areas," and all foreigners bearing a military rank were forbidden to enter them. That kept out unwelcome visitors. Then the official military periodical *Deutsche Wehr* published an article announcing that Germany did not intend to hold large-scale manœuvres in 1938. This was duly reproduced, as was intended, in the foreign Press, and was widely taken as evidence of peaceful intentions. When, however, it inevitably became clear that the truth was actually the precise opposite of what the *Deutsche Wehr* led every one to suppose it was explained that the manœuvres were only intended as training for reserves, for which there had not hitherto been opportunity. By August 9, however, something like 1,500,000 men had been called up, and it was clear that they would remain with the colours for at least two months—*i.e.*, till the beginning of October. On August 15 Hitler attended a part of what were the biggest manœuvres held in Germany since the War. Moreover, all sorts of measures, customary only in war-time, were introduced. Leave was stopped in Government offices, motor-cars and horse-vehicles were requisitioned, a special registration of the addresses of nurses and doctors was carried out, hundreds of suspected anti-Nazis were arrested, women, girls, old men, and men unfit for active service were registered for special duties, there was an exceptional slump on the Berlin Stock Exchange—and, in short, by the third week of August it was obvious, despite the protestations of

THE GERMAN PLAN

the German Press, that Germany was thoroughly and efficiently prepared for war. The military preparations were accompanied by a continuous barrage of Press and radio attacks on everything connected with Czechoslovakia. Under these circumstances it was superfluous to ask against whom Germany was preparing for war.

(ii) THE S.D.P. MEMORANDUM

On June 8 the Sudeten German Party sent to the Government a memorandum ¹ elaborating the eight demands of Henlein's Karlsbad speech, and insisting that the Government must accept them or otherwise the S.d.P. would refuse to continue the discussion which had begun on May 21.

The atmosphere in Prague at the beginning of June was uneasy. The crisis of May 21 was still reverberating, and there was the final instalment of the municipal elections yet to come. In the army feeling against Germany and against a policy of concessions to the Sudetens was running high. British circles in Prague were afraid there might be an army *putsch* to set up a military dictatorship and take over the business of dealing with the S.d.P. Certainly the public as a whole would have made no opposition to such a move. I was surprised to find sober, middle-aged business-men saying that a military Government would be no bad thing. Among very many sections of the population there was a firm belief that a conflict with Germany was inevitable, and that it would be best to make preparations and have the war as soon as possible, rather than attempt to postpone it. Moreover, many people had little confidence in some politicians who were conducting the negotiations with the S.d.P., whereas they never lost confidence in the army. The *putsch* never came off, because the army, whatever individual officers might think, remained loyal to its Supreme Commander, President Beneš, and Beneš knew that the replacement of civilian politicians by generals would solve nothing. The old problems of the

¹ For summary of text, see Appendix I.

Sudeten Germans and relations with Germany would remain, and, in fact, would probably be made worse by aggravation of German hostility which would inevitably result from a change over to military rule in peace-time.

On the day after the delivery of the S.d.P. memorandum, Dr Hodža had a talk with the Parliamentary Chairman of the S.d.P. and other representatives of the party, and besides agreed that the S.d.P. memorandum should not be published in order to avoid causing difficulties during negotiations. On June 10 I had a long talk with an official of the Foreign Office about the S.d.P. and its demands. This official realized only too clearly that all the parleying with the Henleinists was really only shadow-boxing. Here is the note I made of the conversation :

X said the Government would accept the "eight points," although they knew that whatever they did in regard to Henlein could not ultimately make any difference. What really counted was not Henlein, but Hitler. And no concessions to the S.d.P. would stop Germany's *Drang nach Osten*.

X was very emphatic that if Czechoslovakia capitulated to Germany either peacefully or as the result of a local war—which, however, was in his view an impossibility—then France and Britain might have peace for a year or two, but after that a German attack on the West, backed by the resources of Eastern Europe, was inevitable.

He said Mr Newton had advised the Czechoslovak Government to accept the Henlein demands. X confessed that he could not understand how the British could be so easily taken in by the soft words Henlein had spoken in London to Sinclair, Churchill, etc. It was perfectly obvious that Henlein said one thing in London and another in Prague.

In the evening it was learned that the Government had accepted the "eight points" as a "basis of discussion."

The same night the S.d.P. issued a statement declaring that they had made an honest effort to reach an understanding with the Czechoslovaks, and that it was up to them to make it real. The process of deluding the Czechoslovak nation—and, in particular, the capitalist element, which was favourably predisposed—into believing an agreement possible was in full swing.

THE GERMAN PLAN

The elections on June 12, anticipated with some anxiety, passed off in complete calm.

I motored out to various small towns in the Sudeten country on Sunday, and saw no signs of any excitement. The only thing noticeable was a fair number of troops moving along the roads.

The third day's polling confirmed the result of the first two Sundays. The S.d.P. acquired most of the German votes which had formerly gone to the now 'co-ordinated' German Farmers' and German Clerical Parties. It obtained something like 90 per cent. of the German votes, but not, it must be realized, 90 per cent. of all the votes in the German *area*. Because of the fact that hardly any municipality was purely German there were almost always some Czechoslovak candidates, and a proportionate number of votes. In such a Henleinist centre as Reichenberg, for instance, where thirty-three S.d.P. men were elected, six Czechoslovaks also obtained seats. In the Sudeten *area* as a whole the proportion of S.d.P. votes was about 68 per cent. The remaining 32 per cent. went to Czechoslovaks and anti-Henlein Germans. Still, the Henleinists had grounds enough for claiming a famous victory and celebrating it with special ceremonies. Houses in the Sudeten districts were decked with flags and evergreens and flowers, and the windows illuminated—as, indeed, many had been even on the night before the elections.

The Reich could not, of course, let the elections go past without exploiting the occasion for verbal warfare. On polling day Herr Hess, Hitler's deputy, delivered himself of an attack on Czechoslovakia, and on the next day the German Press came out with some choice vituperation, the best of which was perhaps the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt's* comment that

The Sudeten Germans have emerged victorious from the martyrdom of the Czechoslovak elections. Soldierly, blinded with rage and armed with rubber truncheons, ox-hide whips, and steel rods, were unable to prevent a triumph won in the teeth of horror. . . .

Despite the anger which these wild accusations naturally aroused among the Czechs, the Government pressed on with

its efforts to get the talks going again with the Henleinist leaders as soon as possible once the elections were out of the way. Accordingly, on Tuesday, June 14, Dr Hodža again received delegates of the Sudeten German Party, and on the following day came a statement from both sides announcing that both the S.d.P. memorandum and the Nationalities Statute which the Government was preparing would be used as the basis for the discussions.

The Prime Minister and what was known as the Political Committee of the Cabinet—consisting of one Minister from each of the six parties making up the Government Coalition—had on Monday begun the final drafting of the Nationalities Statute. On Saturday, June 18, an optimistic official *communiqué* was published, which concluded by saying :

If the negotiations are continued in the atmosphere of goodwill which has been shown on all sides, and at the present rate of progress, there is reason to expect that the Government—all members of which are in complete agreement—will be able to submit to Parliament in July a comprehensive set of Bills which will provide a new and lasting basis for the nationality policy of the Czechoslovak Republic.

Dr Hodža at this time was particularly optimistic. Indeed, considering that he had seen the S.d.P. memorandum it may be said that he was ridiculously optimistic. For weeks, it must be remembered, hardly any one but the Premier and the Political Committee had any idea of what the S.d.P. demands were. When they were eventually made public, on July 19—despite the agreement for secrecy during the negotiations—there was an immediate outcry in the Czechoslovak Press. The *České Slovo*, organ of Dr Beneš's former party, the Czechoslovak National Socialists, said the memorandum was hostile to the State, because the S.d.P. wanted to split the State into separate parts ; that it was anti-democratic, because the S.d.P. proposed the introduction of totalitarianism.

Our duty [said the paper] is to yield nothing to these provocative proposals, but to pursue our aim—namely, a democratic settlement and democratic equality of all citizens within the Republic.

The *Lidové Noviny*, famous liberal paper, declared :

The division of the State into autonomous language areas, with separate governments and legislative diets, is quite impossible, since they would disrupt the State and cripple its administration.

Even *Venkov*, organ of Dr Hodža's own Agrarian Party, said :

Right from the beginning four or five points of the Karlsbad Programme have been unacceptable from the standpoint of Czechoslovak sovereignty. . . . We decline to enter into any discussion on party memoranda, because thus we might easily be involved in nationality or party disputes before the Government had completed the laws of national conciliation.

Dr Hodža no doubt realized, when he first saw the S.d.P. memorandum, that it would get a most unfavourable reception from the general public, and, in fact, from the bulk of the deputies and senators. His official optimism may have been intended, therefore, to create the impression that making concessions to the S.d.P. was not such a terrible matter, after all, and thus predispose public opinion in favour of whatever agreement he might manage to obtain. Dr Hodža was also criticized, with some justification it seems, for relying too much on last-minute improvisation and hoping that things would turn out all right somehow. But, in any case, the Government as a whole and the various political parties took the negotiations with immense seriousness. A most complicated system of committees was established to make sure that everything was done in proper constitutional order. There was the Political Committee of Ministers, the Committee of Party Leaders, the Constitutional Committees of the Chamber and the Senate, a committee of legal experts, and, finally, a big joint committee of deputies and senators, which was intended to prepare the ground for the adoption of the Nationalities Statute in Parliament and inform public opinion. With all this apparatus it was not surprising that things moved slowly.

However, it was felt that great progress had been made when on June 23 there was a full-dress meeting between the S.d.P. negotiating committee and Dr Hodža and the

six Ministers of the Political Committee of the Cabinet. The twelve gentlemen assembled in the Prime Minister's official residence, the *baroque* Kolovrat Palace, in the Valdštynská Ulice, at 10.30 A.M., and separated at 1 P.M. for lunch, meeting again at 5 P.M. The Germans explained their memorandum, and the Czechoslovak Ministers declared that they were prepared for a decentralization of administration, but not for the breaking up of the State. As the *Lidové Noviny* neatly said, "The Germans will get every right except the right to smash the state and oppress others."

The S.d.P. announced that they were insisting on equality of all nationalities in the State, and that a stop must be put to the Czechoslovak 'colonization' of the German areas. This did not look like the road to compromise, but, nevertheless, the Government went on being optimistic, and on June 30 sent the S.d.P. a draft of its proposed Nationalities Statute.

(iii) THE CZECH PROPOSALS AND THE GERMAN PLAN

The big Sokol festival in Prague interrupted political activities during the first week of July, but as soon as it was over the cumbersome apparatus of committees dealing with the Sudeten problem began to move comparatively rapidly. Something like a race against time by the Government was in progress. From July 12 the Political Committee of the Cabinet and the Committee of Party Leaders were meeting daily to finish the draft of the Government's three connected pieces of legislation—the Nationalities Statute the Amendment to the Language Act, and the Administrative Reform Bill.

An indication of the contents of these measures was given by Dr Krofta, the Foreign Minister, in a statement to the *Petit Journal* on July 14. There would be considerable increases of local autonomy for the *communes*, districts, and provinces in such matters as education, social welfare, and communications. Provincial diets would be elected, and each minority would have its own representatives in these diets.

THE GERMAN PLAN

Dr Krofta further defined the Bills by pointing out what they would not contain. There had been talk, he said, of personal autonomy for the Germans. Dr Krofta was here referring to the S.d.P. memorandum—not then published—which demanded for the Germans in Czechoslovakia the right to owe allegiance not to the State, but to a Sudeten German *Führer*, in practice independent of the State.

Such an arrangement, establishing a totalitarian State within the democratic Republic, could not be accepted, declared Dr Krofta. The suggestion for Sudeten German territorial autonomy was equally impracticable.

The next day *The Times* in a leading article correctly summed up the position when it said :

The Czech Government is being asked to allow free play in an important area of the Republic to doctrines fundamentally contrary to those on which their own State is based, and identical with those of a powerful neighbouring State. They have repeatedly declared that they are not prepared to allow the creation of a State within a State, for they fear, not without reason, that its constitution would be first incision leading to the disruption of the Czechoslovak Republic.

To the Germans it now began to seem as though the Czechoslovak Government would present to Parliament—and get voted—its own Bills. The S.d.P. accused the Government of planning to force the measures through, whatever the Henleinist objections were. This was possible to the Government, because there was naturally a majority of Czechoslovak deputies and senators in Parliament, and the Government would have had no difficulty in getting the support of the bulk of them. There was then some justification for the S.d.P. accusation, though it came oddly from a movement which had, from its beginnings, never ceased to use the very basest forms of trickery. I think it is true that the Hodža Government did intend to make its Bills law, with or without the consent of the S.d.P. But in so doing it would only have done what any Government with a large Parliamentary majority is constantly doing in Britain, France, and the U.S.A. The fact that the Parliamentary minority in Czechoslovakia was of a different

nationality from the Parliamentary majority does not alter the fact that the Hodža Government was acting according to the best principles of democratic Parliamentary procedure. For a Government to make full use of its majority has not so far been considered undemocratic—even by those British right-wingers who were most critical of Czechoslovak democracy.

The Hodža Government, in any case, had weighty enough justification even for undemocratic methods. It was virtually at war, not with the Sudeten Germans, but against the colossal might of the Third Reich.

Further, the Bills which the Czechoslovak Government hoped to make law represented an extremely liberal—in these authoritarian days a fantastically liberal—reform of the minorities legislation of the Republic. The Bills would undoubtedly have satisfied the Sudeten German people had they been left to themselves to decide. The real German grievances were all of a local, 'small-town politics' character—and without the interference of Hitler would have been recognized as such by both sides, and settled as such.

It was precisely the fact, well understood in Germany, that the Bills would soften Sudeten German opposition that made them so dangerous to Hitler's plans: these were, as we know, the cession of territory and the smashing of the French-Czechoslovak-Russian alliances. With a satisfied Sudeten German population agitation against the Czechoslovak State would have been much more difficult. It was essential, therefore, to prevent the Government Bills getting before Parliament.

The Czechs, for their part, saw the German game, and were equally determined to go ahead with the Bills, and get them through Parliament before Hitler could do anything. Thus came about the race against time.

The Germans quickly brought into play all the time-honoured methods. At the beginning of July a lot of 'whisper propaganda' was set going in the Sudeten areas about a forthcoming *putsch* headed by Henlein. The S.d.P. at this time tried to get employers to close down their

factories as a political demonstration. F.S. men were going about talking alternatively of war and a general strike, but all unanimously declaring that "The Day" would now be on July 21. At the same time there were more sceptical spirits who said—more truly than they knew—"If Hitler doesn't come by October 28 [the anniversary of the founding of the Republic] he won't come at all."

Then came more articles in the Reich newspapers attacking Czechoslovakia, complaints that the Government measures were to be imposed by decree, a suggestion—and it was significant—that Britain should intervene to prevent this happening. Next, on July 16, there was a week-end 'scare' that the Czechoslovak army was mobilizing. It was quite untrue, and the German Press the next day published Dr Mastný's denial.

These efforts, however, failed to impress the Czechoslovak Government. Something more drastic had to be done. Hitler turned to the resources of diplomacy. It was at this point that he sent the mysterious Captain Fritz Wiedemann on a sudden mission to London on the very eve of the departure for Paris of the King and Queen, accompanied by Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary. The moment was admirably chosen. The much publicized State visit to France, with the reiterated assurances of Anglo-French solidarity, had immensely encouraged the Czechs. They had a military alliance with France, and they reckoned that if France and Britain were solidly united then they had, in effect, an alliance with Britain as well. July 18, the day before the visit, was, therefore, the precisely correct moment to put a spoke in this wheel, and to use that spoke for breaking down Czech determination in the matter of the minority Bills.

Captain Wiedemann had been in London during the May 21 crisis, and on several occasions before that. His position among Hitler's advisers is somewhat peculiar. He is often called Hitler's A.D.C., but, in fact, for long he held no official position or rank. (He is now German Consul-General in San Francisco.) That does not mean that his influence is unimportant or that his opinions are not listened

to with respect. On the contrary, Wiedemann was Hitler's company commander during the War, and the Führer still has great respect for his former superior officer. After the War Wiedemann settled down on his farm in Bavaria, and does not appear to have played any part in politics until 1933—the year of the Nazi revolution—when he was given a job in the party as adjutant to Herr Hess, the Führer's deputy. On January 1, 1935, Wiedemann was taken on to Hitler's own staff, and in November 1937 he was given the important mission of trying to win American official opinion over to a more friendly attitude towards Germany.

In Britain Captain Wiedemann became known chiefly through his friendship with Princess Stefanie Hohenlohe-Waldenburg-Schillingsfürst, at whose London house he stayed during his visit in July. This lady had played some part in European politics for a number of years, and continued to do so through the Czechoslovak crisis. Known to her friends by her maiden name of "Steffi Richter," she is the daughter of a Viennese banker. She obtained the title of Princess by marrying in 1914 Prince Friedrich Franz Augustin Hohenlohe, from whom she was separated in 1920. She was well known in society in Budapest and Paris, where she maintained a political *salon*. She had friends in Prague, and often stayed there, and at Karlsbad. In London she was well known in certain circles favourable to closer co-operation with Germany. It is clear that she had, in any case, contacts useful to the Nazis, since she subsequently made possible one of Lord Runciman's most important meetings with Henlein.

On July 18 Captain Wiedemann arrived in London with a personal message from Hitler which the latter was anxious Lord Halifax should receive before his departure for Paris with the King and Queen. Exactly what the Captain told Lord Halifax at his house in Eaton Square will doubtless never be known. There is, however, reason to think that he communicated a good deal more than the innocuous message of goodwill from Hitler, which was all that was made public in the British Press. In fact, what Captain Wiedemann said may be summed up as an offer of German

THE GERMAN PLAN

goodwill—at a price, the price being the surrender of Czechoslovakia. “If you want to be friends with Germany you must make Czechoslovakia—and France—give in to our demands.” That was the Captain’s message.

Within a few days it was clear that Captain Wiedemann’s visit on the eve of Lord Halifax’s departure for Paris was part of a carefully devised German plan for bringing pressure to bear on Britain and France, in order that they should do likewise with Czechoslovakia.

On July 20 Lord Halifax met M. Daladier and M. Bonnet in Paris. The French Ministers were, to begin with, of the opinion that no attempt should be made to drive the Czechoslovak Government to further concessions. After hearing Lord Halifax’s account of Hitler’s “goodwill message” they changed their minds, and accepted the British argument that “the Czechoslovaks must give way.” The *communiqué* issued after the ministerial conference saying that there was complete identity of opinion between France and Britain was thus perfectly true.

In Prague it was learned that Lord Halifax and the French Ministers discussed the idea of joint arbitration in the Czechoslovak problem by Britain, France, Italy, and Germany. The idea had been mentioned by Captain Wiedemann.

Captain Wiedemann’s effort was quickly reinforced by one from Dr von Dirksen, the German Ambassador in London, who on Friday, July 22, had a long talk with Mr Chamberlain. *The Times* reported :

The Prime Minister and the Ambassador talked so long together that later in the day it was being widely said by those who should know that Dr von Dirksen had declared his Government’s intention of calling a Four-Power Conference, and that Mr Chamberlain went on to talk of a German guarantee of non-aggression.

Here, then, from the most sober and best informed of British newspapers is the first indication that the Munich Conference and Agreement were no last-minute brilliant idea, but the working out of a carefully nurtured plan.

According to information I was given in Prague, what

von Dirksen actually said to Mr Chamberlain was that if the Czechoslovak Government did not accept Henlein's Karlsbad Programme it would be impossible to restrain the indignation of the Sudeten Germans, with the result that blood would be shed, and Germany would be obliged to take steps to prevent the repetition of such unpleasantness. Anti-Henlein German quarters in Czechoslovakia even maintained that von Dirksen, far from bringing peace proposals, had actually threatened war if Britain and France did not call the Czechoslovak Government to order.

It seems, in any case, plain from the number of interventions made by the British Government in Prague that both Captain Wiedemann and Dr von Dirksen had used very determined language, which had not failed of its intended effect. On Wednesday, July 20, the very day on which the Anglo-French discussions were going on in Paris, Mr Newton, the British Minister in Prague, was received by President Beneš; the next day he saw Dr Hodža, the Prime Minister. He told the latter that, in the British view, the Czechoslovak Government should not break off negotiations even if the Sudeten German Party rejected the Government's proposals. Moreover, Britain recommended further concessions. On Saturday, July 23, the day after Mr Chamberlain's talk with von Dirksen, Mr Newton, on instructions from the Government, was again in conference with Dr Hodža. Again he urged greater concessions to the Germans, particularly in the matter of their demand for autonomy. Mr Newton also gave a report of what von Dirksen had said to Mr Chamberlain the day before. The next day Berlin expressed gratification at the British intervention in Prague. Naturally; it proved that Wiedemann and von Dirksen had made an impression on the British; it proved that the German plan was working. How misleading were the reports that Captain Wiedemann brought simply a personal message of goodwill from Hitler is shown by the fact that in Berlin it was never a secret that, as *The Times* Berlin correspondent said, "Self-determination for the Sudeten Germans is claimed to be a German interest on which no compromise is possible." More

THE GERMAN PLAN

concretely, the *Deutsche Diplomatisch-politische Korrespondenz*, organ of the German Foreign Office, rejected outright the Czechoslovak plan for provincial diets with separate sections for the different nationalities.

If Germany was determined not to compromise on this point, and Czechoslovakia equally determined not to give way any further, then nothing remained to Germany but the use of force, which, if France held to her treaty, meant European war. To give the impression that Germany was desirous of peace was, therefore, sheer hypocrisy. Captain Wiedemann's message was really the communication of a polite blackmailer. It was not, it is true, "Give me Czechoslovakia, or I'll bomb London to bits," but, as *The Times* elegantly said,

It is not an unreasonable theory that by sending Captain Wiedemann to London last week-end Herr Hitler desired to convey a hint that the Anglo-French decisions on future policy in Czechoslovakia will be fateful for the future of Anglo-German relations.

On Saturday night, after Mr Newton had seen Dr Hodža, the German Ambassador in London left for Germany on six weeks' leave. The German 'hint' was being confidently left to simmer in the minds of Mr Chamberlain and Lord Halifax.

Germany's veiled threats had induced the British to give in, and the British had persuaded the French to give in. But it appeared that the task of breaking down the resistance of the Czechoslovaks to German pressure was much more difficult. This tough little nation was not so easily impressed by Hitler as were the Great Powers of Western Europe. British pressure, on behalf of Germany, had to be increased. Mr Newton called on Dr Hodža once more, on Monday, July 25, and informed him that the British Government proposed to send Lord Runciman to Prague. Dr Hodža's immediate reaction was distinctly cool. "Četeka," the Government news agency owned by Dr Hodža's Agrarian Party, issued a statement saying :

The proposal is that an outstanding British personality should come to Prague and should study the Sudeten German

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

question on the spot. The proposal is being considered, but hitherto no decision has been taken.

That was the whole statement. There was nothing in it about the "outstanding British personality" being a "mediator" as Mr Chamberlain indicated on the following day. To an 'investigator' the Czechoslovaks naturally did not object, though they saw no specific necessity for one, whether it was Lord Runciman or any other eminent Englishman. "When the British next have trouble in Ireland or India will they allow us to send a Czechoslovak politician to investigate?" was the question I was frequently asked.

Quite inexplicable was Mr Chamberlain's statement in the House of Commons that Lord Runciman was being sent "in response to a request from the Czechoslovak Government." No such request was ever made in Prague. On the contrary, the proposal came from Britain. The question was to persuade the Czechoslovaks to accept it. Mr Chamberlain represented the decision to send Lord Runciman as a decision to "lend a hand," as an effort to help the Czechoslovaks out of their difficulties. This was misrepresenting the position. The Czechoslovaks did not want this sort of help. They considered that the British Government could perfectly well express its opinions through the British Minister in Prague; beyond that they felt that Britain could best help them by backing up France if the dispute finally came to a 'show-down' with Germany.

It seems likely that the immediate purpose of Lord Runciman's mission was to prevent the Czechoslovak Government's Bills coming before Parliament and quickly becoming law. Had this happened the Sudeten German Party, Hitler, and Mr Chamberlain would all have been in a difficult position. The Government measures were extremely liberal, and once they had been voted by the Czechoslovak Parliament and made public to the whole world it would have been difficult for Mr Chamberlain to do otherwise than suggest that, at least, the new laws should be given a fair trial. That, however, would not have suited Hitler's plan for the annexation of the Sudeten country

by October 1. A delay of several months while the new minorities regulations were being tried out would have dislocated everything. It must, therefore, be assumed that Hitler would have rejected any idea of giving a reasonable trial to the minorities laws, and would have proceeded at once to violence in the Sudeten country, reckoning that, though Mr Chamberlain might disapprove, Britain would take no action. From Mr Chamberlain's point of view, however, the chance of making up to Germany by fixing the Czechoslovaks would have been lost.

It will be remembered that on July 26 Mr Chamberlain, in the House of Commons, denied that any attempt had been made to hustle the Czechoslovak Government; on the contrary, he said, "our anxiety has been rather lest the Czechoslovak Government should be too hasty in dealing with a situation in which it was most desirable to prevent any deadlock." This was perfectly true; at all costs the Minorities Bills must not be allowed to get on the statute book.

On the other hand, it is incorrect to assume that Mr Chamberlain's denial of 'hustling' the Prague Government meant that Britain was not exerting any considerable pressure; on the contrary, it is plain that she was. In particular, during the days immediately preceding the Prime Minister's statement Mr Newton was persistently urging the Czechoslovaks to give in yet further to the German demands. That pressure was continued, with growing force, throughout the summer, and culminated in the notorious 2 A.M. visit to President Beneš on September 21.

It was an ominous sign, in the view of foreign observers in Prague, that the Sudeten German Party welcomed the Runciman mission. A great deal of play was made with the pretence that Lord Runciman was coming in an individual capacity, independently of the Government; but certainly no one believed that for a moment, especially when it was announced that members of the Foreign Office Staff and of the Consular Service were to assist Lord Runciman. The Reich German Press and German official circles very astutely took up a reserved, almost indifferent,

attitude to the whole business—astute, because if they had shown too great satisfaction the Czechoslovaks could justifiably have claimed that the British ‘investigator’ was clearly not expected in Germany to be impartial, and was, therefore, not acceptable to Czechoslovakia.

Britain’s decision to intervene actively in the dispute with the Sudeten Germans created difficulties for the Czechoslovak Government, though they put the best possible face on it, and the Press of all the Government parties was full of articles which somewhat ineffectually sought to convince the public of all the blessings that would flow from British interest in Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak man in the street, however, showed an obstinate sense of realities in remaining steadily suspicious. “What does this English lord know about our affairs?” I was frequently asked. “We’ve been dealing with the Germans for hundreds of years. We are better judges of what is right than any English politician.”

The main difficulty for the Government was that the arrival of Lord Runciman would mean, in effect, that negotiations with the Sudeten German party would have to be begun all over again precisely at the moment when the Government were ready to introduce their Bills into Parliament, which had been summoned for August 2. On July 26 the Cabinet approved the final draft of the Nationalities Statute—which had been submitted to the S.d.P. on June 30—and also the Language Act amendment, which regulated the conditions under which minority languages might be used in official business. On July 28 the Government handed the S.d.P. a draft of the proposed Local Government Bill. This provided for the establishment of Provincial Diets, one in Prague for Bohemia, one in Brno for Moravia-Silesia, and one in Bratislava for Slovakia. Within each Diet the various national minorities would have their own sections—*e.g.*, the Bohemian Diet would be divided into Czech and German sections, the Slovak Diet into Slovak and Magyar sections, and that in Moravia-Silesia into Czech, German, and Polish sections. Each national section would have a numerical strength pro-

THE GERMAN PLAN

portionate to the population total of that nationality within each province. Each Diet was to have an executive committee consisting of twelve members, on which the different nationalities would also be proportionately represented. The Diets were to control provincial administration and to have the right of objecting to legislative measures affecting their interests. Questions of foreign policy, State finances, and national defence were reserved to the Central Government.

Germany and the Sudeten German Party at once rejected both the Nationalities Statute and the Local Government Bill. The Reich Press referred to the "crass inadequacy" of the Czechoslovak proposals. Henlein's weekly paper, *Die Rundschau*, ominously remarked :

The more thoroughly the possibilities and necessities of a comprehensive settlement of the nationality problem in the Republic are examined the more clearly will it appear that *our proposals contain only a minimum of what is necessary*. In this sense we welcome the English observer and investigator.

On July 30 Herr Kundt, leader of the S.d.P. negotiating committee, in a letter to Dr Hodža, asked him, among other questions, whether the Government would adhere to its intentions as expressed in previous conversations that these conversations should continue, or did they consider this plan as superseded through the sending out of Lord Runciman? Dr Hodža replied that the presence of Lord Runciman would not make any difference to the procedure of the negotiations. This was an answer to save 'face'; Dr Hodža could not really suppose that the British mission would make no difference, but it was hard to admit such dependence on a foreign Power.

The Chamber of Deputies accordingly went through the formality of meeting on August 2 as arranged. It sat for precisely half an hour. Herr Kundt was invited to begin a further series of discussions on the following day—when Lord Runciman was due to arrive. All this was a sort of diplomatic 'Roger de Coverley,' signifying nothing. On August 3 Lord Runciman and his retinue installed themselves in Prague's most pretentious hotel. The Government

and the Sudeten German Party completed the dance figure by agreeing to postpone their negotiations, and in Berlin the Foreign Office announced in the *Deutsche Diplomatisch-politische Korrespondenz* that the Czechoslovak Nationalities Statute was useless, and that Lord Runciman's task would be "to expose Czech subterfuges, and to establish the facts and conditions in their true character, in order, perhaps, to draw appropriate conclusions."

The German Foreign Office knew what it was saying in defining Lord Runciman's job in terms rather different from those of Mr Chamberlain. Britain and France now took on their shoulders the half of Germany's work. The German plan became also the Runciman plan.

CHAPTER VII

THE RUNCIMAN PLAN

(i) THE WAY OF A MEDIATOR

FOUR middle-aged to elderly English gentlemen and two typists arrived in Prague at the beginning of August 1938, and established themselves in rooms 104-107, 110, 112, 115, 116, 218-220, and 232 of the Hotel Alcron in the Štěpánská, a turning off the Wenceslas Square. They had come to tidy up the disorderly relations of the Sudeten Germans and the Czechs. The most important of the four gentlemen was the former President of the Board of Trade, Lord Runciman.

The Czech man in the street was noticeably puzzled as to the status and qualifications of the four gentlemen. He did not understand why they had a right to interfere in Czechoslovakia's affairs, nor what was their purpose in doing so. As an Englishman, I was asked many questions about my countrymen in the Hotel Alcron—questions which were exceedingly difficult to answer. The typical educated Czech with an interest in politics, a man who was probably a lawyer or a doctor, and whose name was possibly Dr Novák, would talk to me about Britain and Czechoslovakia; and the conversation usually went like this:

"Lord Runciman, I suppose, is representing the British Government?"

"No. The Prime Minister has declared that Lord Runciman is acting in a personal capacity."

"And what is his personal capacity?"

"He is a millionaire shipowner."

"Does that qualify him for understanding a working-class and lower middle-class nation like us Czechs?"

"I don't know," I always answered.

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

"Has he lived a long while in Czechoslovakia? Or have his assistants?"

"No. None of them have ever been in Czechoslovakia for long."

"H'm. . . . Perhaps, though, they have made a special study of our country?"

"No," I said; "I never heard that they had."

"Very strange! And who are Lord Runciman's assistants?"

"There is Mr Frank Ashton-Gwatkin. He is head of the Economics Section of the Foreign Office."

"Oh, then the mission is official, after all?"

"Not at all. Mr Ashton-Gwatkin told the London correspondent of one of your own papers, the *Prager Tagblatt*, on July 30, that, 'As the mission is purely unofficial I have taken a holiday from the Foreign Office, and relinquished my salary. Thus I can work as a completely unprejudiced, private person and express my opinions freely.'"

"And what is Mr Ashton-Gwatkin as a private person?"

"He writes novels under the name of John Paris."

"Ah . . . the novels are perhaps about Czechoslovakia or Central Europe?"

"No. They are about Japan."

At this point Dr Novák would look very bewildered.

I usually hurried on to say, "Then there is Mr R. J. Stopford. He is an expert on India: he was Secretary of the famous Simon Commission on India. And he is very good on international finance: he was Secretary of Martin's Bank, London, and of the Standstill Committee on Germany's foreign debts. . . ."

"I see. He knows about Germany and India, but not about Czechoslovakia?"

"I expect he has read something about your country. He is a very conscientious man. . . ."

At this point the conversation would usually come to an end. Most Czechs were too polite to say outright that the whole business seemed exceedingly queer, and that these Englishmen who were not even experts on Czechoslovak

THE RUNCIMAN PLAN

affairs had no business to come to Prague at all—but that was what most of them thought.

Mr Stopford (popularly known as “Stop-watch” among some of the journalists in Prague) soon became the Press *attaché* of the Runciman mission. He was always affable to talk to, but, like most Press *attachés*, seldom had any information for the Press.

The fourth member of the party that came out from London was Mr Geoffrey Peto, from 1931 to 1935 Lord Runciman's Parliamentary Private Secretary. Mr Peto's functions in Prague were obscure. He was neither conspicuously important like Mr Frank Ashton-Gwatkin nor conspicuously useful like Mr Stopford. Perhaps he composed the daily official *communiqué* of the purely private mission.

These gentlemen were assisted by Mr Ian Henderson, of the Consular Service. He had previously been stationed at Innsbruck, and during the summer of 1938 was one of the British ‘observers’ in the Sudetenland. The ‘personal’ and ‘private’ and ‘unofficial’ mission thus rapidly revealed itself as a body consisting of officials or of official contacts. The scepticism with which the Czechs regarded the protestations of non-officialdom was nicely indicated by the *Prager Tagblatt's* headline to the story of Lord Runciman's arrival: “Private Man's Highly Official Reception.” The headline was justified, since Lord and Lady Runciman were welcomed at the Wilson Station by Mr B. C. Newton, by President Beneš's *Chef du Protocol*, M. Smutný, by representatives of Prime Minister Hodža and Foreign Minister Krofta, by the Lord Mayor of Prague, and by two members of the Sudeten German Party, who dashed on to the platform at the last minute. The presence of the two Germans was not at all well seen by the Czechs, who regarded it as symbolizing the S.d.P. claim that they, a minority party, should be put on the same level as the Government.

At six o'clock in the evening the members of the ‘purely private’ Runciman mission held an official reception for the local and foreign newspaper-men. Lord Runciman,

looking tired, and glistening with perspiration—Prague was enjoying a truly Central European heat-wave just then—mounted a carpet-covered wooden box in the dining-room of the Hotel Aleron and read a brief statement of the kind that puts after-dinner assemblies in an amiable frame of mind. First a wee spot of humour: "Are the gentlemen of the pencil or the gentlemen of the camera in the majority?" Dutiful laughter from such of the local Czech journalists as understood English. The photographers fired off their flashlight bulbs, and then came the smooth phrases:

I did not ask for this job. Before I left London both parties told us that my presence would be welcome. . . . I come as one who has had forty years' experience of political affair in my own country, and I have learned that permanent peace and tranquillity can only be secured on a basis of mutual consent. Any settlement presupposes goodwill on both sides. . . . I come as a friend to all and enemy to none.

Then a few fulsome words about the invaluable help the Press could give "in interpreting to the world some of the troubles that beset it." But the Press was not to ask any questions just then, "for you will not get any answers." Arrangements would be made, however, for supplying accurate information about the mission. The arrangements were duly made. Unfortunately the information supplied, while as accurate as the statement that twice two are four, was also just about as interesting.

Like other correspondents, I had a few words with Lord Runciman after he had finished reading his piece. When I told him I was representing the *Daily Herald* he said brightly, "Well, I have been glad to see the way your paper has been handling this business. It's been most helpful." My heart sank when I heard these dulcet words. Impossible not to recognize the blandishment method of attempting to silence criticism. I guessed there was not going to be much open diplomacy on this job, and I was right. The whole mission from that day on was sewn up in solemn rectitude and silence.

THE RUNCIMAN PLAN

"And will you see the other German party, as well as the Henleinists?" I asked.

Lord Runciman looked blank.

"I mean, will you see the German Social Democrats?" I explained.

Lord Runciman still looked blank. I don't believe he had the faintest idea until that moment that there was a second German party in Czechoslovakia. At last, after a noticeable pause, he said, "They have not so far communicated with me."

This was not the case, because Jaksch, the leader of the Social Democrats, had shown me a letter sent to Lord Runciman, *via* the British Legation, two or three days before. Lord Runciman's ignorance of the letter could only mean that it had never got to him. This, I suspect, was the fate of a good many of the memoranda, petitions, and letters that were sent to the British mission.¹

A Yugoslav interrupted with a request that "the lord" should say a few words for his paper.

"Yugoslav, did you say? Oh, yes, I like your country very much. I was cruising in my yacht off the Dalmatian coast . . . charming. . . ."

The Yugoslav scribbled in his notebook. Lord Runciman smiled. This was better stuff for the Press than politics. He went on talking about Dalmatia for some time.

Lord Runciman seemed to me a shrewd, determined business-man, with a tight, hard brain. I believe that the outline of the plan he finally recommended to the British Government was already fixed in his mind the day he arrived in Prague. I don't believe that all the innumerable talks and conferences and interviews in Czechoslovakia did anything but maybe alter a few details. I left the Press conference at the Hotel Alcron feeling very pessimistic for the future of Czechoslovakia. I could not imagine this personification of the British ruling class ever having much

¹ When Lord Runciman did meet the German Social Democrats a week later the Henleinist Press, which had hitherto been favourable to the British mission, plainly expressed its annoyance, declaring that Lord Runciman had received the Social Democrats "presumably for his own personal satisfaction, since they are of no political importance."

sympathy or understanding for the democratic, anti-Fascist outlook of the predominantly working-class and lower middle-class Czech nation. Whereas it was plain that he would feel at home with precisely that circle of big industrialists, landowners, and bankers—represented politically by the Agrarian Party—which was the biggest internal menace to democracy in Czechoslovakia.

Czech public opinion, as the *České Slovo* rightly said, was “not enthusiastic” about the Runciman mission. At the same time the Czechs were prepared to give it a chance, to keep an open mind. The public, added *České Slovo*, “believes in the traditional English fair-play.” Not much of that belief, alas, remained two months later.

Lord Runciman began badly, so far as the Czechs were concerned, by proposing to see Henlein on August 4—the day on which he had his first meeting with President Beneš. It was pointed out that the worst possible impression would be created if Lord Runciman saw a politician, who was, after all, only the leader of an Opposition party, immediately after being received by the head of the State. So the meeting with Henlein was postponed at the last moment. Nevertheless, three of the Sudeten German Party leaders visited Lord Runciman at his hotel in the afternoon. This was not much appreciated either by the Czechs.

One of the party leaders said to me, “We don’t understand why Britain apparently puts President Beneš and Henlein on the same level. Henlein is already being treated as though he were head of a State which had been granted belligerent rights.”

Lord Runciman did not improve the first impression he had made by spending his first week-end in Czechoslovakia at Zd’ar Castle, the country house of one of the former Austrian nobles—Count Zdenko Radoslav Kinsky, race-horse owner and lord of wide estates in the wooded, hilly country on the borders of Bohemia and Moravia. Count Kinsky’s wife, Eleonore, is the widow of the late Prince Schwarzenberg, and was, before her first marriage, Countess Clam-Gallas.

THE RUNCIMAN PLAN

The Schwarzenberg and Clam-Gallas families were outstanding members of that small class of persons who had owned huge areas of Bohemia and Moravia before the Czechoslovak Republic carried out its land reform in the years immediately after the War. The Zd'ar Castle estate, for instance, which was inherited by Countess Kinsky, originally amounted to 30,000 acres, and at the present time is about 15,000 acres. Under the Austro-Hungarian Empire more than a quarter of all Bohemia belonged to less than 2 per cent. of the landowners, and nearly one-third of Moravia was owned by less than 1 per cent. "It is incontestably true," says Elizabeth Wiskemann, "that the Historic or Sudeten Provinces, while Austria-Hungary lived, had remained fantastically feudal in territorial organization."

It is not difficult to imagine how these feudal landowners, these Schwarzenbergs and Clam-Gallas, felt about the dividing up of the big estates and the redistribution of considerable territories among the almost landless peasants. This feudal class never became reconciled to its diminished status within the Republic, and its political ideas remained those of the Habsburg Empire. When National-Socialism in Germany showed that it protected the interests of the Prussian landowners many members of the parallel class in Czechoslovakia welcomed the new doctrine according to Hitler. Specifically, they supported Henlein in the same way as did the Sudeten German industrialists whose methods have already been described. It was, therefore, hardly surprising that the Czechs as a whole strongly resented Lord Runciman's addiction to the company of people who were often, to put it bluntly, either actual or potential enemies of the Czechoslovak Republic.

It was, of course, insisted that Lord Runciman's weekends were purely social visits, without political significance. But no Czech, reading the names of the hosts and Lord Runciman's fellow-guests, could be expected to accept such a view. Well-known names like Hohenlohe, Schwarzenberg, Sternberg, Schönborn—all of which were represented at Count Kinsky's house-party—have a very definite political

significance for the Czechs. They represent the old Austria, the Germanizing influence against which the Czechs had fought for 300 years—against which they are still fighting. That Lord Runciman was associating with this class meant to the average Czech that he was Germanophil and already prejudiced against the Czech case. If Lord Runciman really desired to carry out his mission conscientiously it was, therefore, at the very least, tactless of him at once to accept the hospitality of the former Austrian nobility.

No doubt Lord Runciman's opinions on the Czechoslovak-German problem were not much affected by the views of his hosts, but none the less they used their opportunity to press the German case with every means available. This inevitably became known in the newspapers, and created further suspicions among the public. For example, Lord Runciman spent his second week-end in August with another member of the Kinsky family, the late Count Ulrich Kinsky, a landowner with estates at Böhmisches-Kamnitz, in North Bohemia, and a member of the Sudeten German Party. On Sunday, August 15, Count Ulrich Kinsky, accompanied by the district leader of the S.d.P., Herr Urban, and a party member, Herr Märten, son of the local S.d.P. mayor, took Lord Runciman on a tour of the district, with the object of showing him the economic distress allegedly caused by Czech policy. The whole trip naturally had only propaganda aims. Lord Runciman was shown a derelict weaving-mill at Ober-Kamnitz. Actually it had been closed down in 1929 owing to the financial failure of its German owner. Five hundred yards from this factory stands a flourishing paper-mill, employing 600 workmen, and managed by a Czech, Dr K. Robětin, President of the Association of Paper Manufacturers. This, however, was not shown to Lord Runciman. Robětin eventually wrote personally to Lord Runciman pointing out how he had been misled. As an example of the alleged wretched housing conditions inflicted by Czechs upon Sudeten Germans, Lord Runciman was shown a dilapidated building, inhabited by five families, which was undoubtedly in a condition bad enough to require demolition. Lord Runciman was not,

THE RUNCIMAN PLAN

however, informed that the house belonged to none other than the above-mentioned S.d.P. mayor, Herr Mårten, and that he charged more than twice as much rent as the previous landlord.

Very possibly Lord Runciman was not at all impressed by these attempts to convert him to the S.d.P. cause, but by going about with prominent members of the party in this way he inevitably provided the Henleinists with a magnificent propaganda point, and, wittingly or not, created the impression among the Sudeten Germans that he was on the Henleinist side. The S.d.P. naturally made the most of every opportunity they got. When Mr Ashton-Gwatkin and other members of the mission visited the Reichenberg Trade Fair on August 21 the Henleinists provided a guard of honour of F.S. men in uniform, between the ranks of whom the visitors had to walk, to the accompaniment of "*Sieg Heil!*" greetings and much raising of the right arm. Exhibitors at the Fair greeted them similarly, and a local correspondent of the *Sozialdemokrat* who attempted to approach the British visitors was turned away by F.S. men, on the ground that the visit was purely an S.d.P. affair.

Organized 'spontaneous' telegrams to Lord Runciman were another device used by the S.d.P. to put over its propaganda. Characteristic of the way this was done is the following circular sent out by the S.d.P. District Office, at Freudenthal, in Silesia. It is here translated exactly as set out in the original :

SUDETEN GERMAN PARTY
DISTRICT OFFICE,
FREUDENTHAL

CHAIRMAN : KONRAD HENLEIN
DEPT. : LOCAL MANAGEMENT/SELF-GOVERNMENT

August 24, 1938

DISTRICT NOTICE No. 104/1938
ADDRESSED TO ALL BURGOMASTER COMRADES
IN THE POLITICAL DISTRICT OF FREUDENTHAL

COMRADES,

A memorandum setting out the distress of our homeland has already been sent to Lord Runciman in Prague.

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

We wish to enhance the effect of this memorandum by every community council in our district inviting Lord Runciman, by telegram, to visit our homeland.

All communities will summon a sitting of their councils on Monday, August 20, at which it will be resolved to dispatch the following telegram to Lord Runciman, Hotel Alcron, Prague :

“ Your Excellency. We invite you to visit our distressed areas in Silesia. Community Council :, District of Freudenthal.”

At the same time as the telegram a letter is to be sent to the same address, as follows :

“ YOUR EXCELLENCY,

The Community Council of, in the district of Freudenthal, resolved at its session to-day to ask you to visit our distressed areas in Silesia, beginning with the district town Freudenthal.

We hope that your Excellency will see your way to meeting our people's wish in this matter.

Yours respectfully,

”

material interests. Whatever the cause, the scrupulousness of Czechoslovak propaganda was, under contemporary conditions, almost absurd. A typical illustration of the restraint on the Czech side occurred shortly after Lord Runciman arrived in Prague. On August 4 the German newspapers and radio launched a bitter attack on Czechoslovakia because three Czechoslovak aeroplanes had allegedly flown over German territory. On August 7 Prague issued a detailed statement that since May 20 no less than seventy-four violations of the Czech frontiers had been made by German 'planes. The statement quite correctly pointed out that none of these cases had been made the excuse for attacks by the Czechoslovak Press such as the Reich Press and radio had made in the last few days.

The second reason which caused the Czechs to limit their propaganda was their belief that the Republic's cause was a just one, that Britain would recognize it as such, and act accordingly. The adoption of Nazi propaganda methods, it was thought, was not merely unnecessary, but would actually prove harmful. Such methods, it was considered, would only make an unfavourable impression on the democratic countries. Belief in British 'fair-play' still held, and it was supposed that Nazi propaganda could not affect this.

For these reasons, then, the Czechs made no special efforts to influence Lord Runciman. Possibly they were right. In all probability no amount of propaganda in 1938 would have made any difference. It was too late by then. They should have begun years before. This was admitted by officials and journalists in Prague after the Munich tragedy. One man, director of a semi-official news agency, said to me: "Hitler conquered Germany by propaganda. Now he is conquering Europe in the same way. Even the Hungarians spent more on propaganda than we did, and events have justified them."

During the first week or two after Lord Runciman's arrival in Prague nothing much happened in Czechoslovakia. History was not being made there, but in Germany, where, as we have seen, the High Command was

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

busy organizing the mobilization of 1,500,000 men. To me, as to many other people in Prague, it seemed superfluous for Lord Runciman to be attempting 'mediation' between the S.d.P. and the Prague Government, since it was obvious that the heart of the problem lay beyond the Czechoslovak frontiers. Nevertheless, the four gentlemen and the two typists at the Hotel Alcron worked away strenuously, receiving deputations of Germans, Poles, Hungarians, Slovaks, reading memoranda, preparing digests and translations, writing reports for Mr Chamberlain and the Foreign Office, and issuing *communiqués* to the Press.

Lord Runciman's first noteworthy action in the interests of mediation was to meet Henlein on August 18. The Czech public was disagreeably startled by the huge headlines of the Prague midday papers announcing : " Runciman Lunches with Henlein."

THE RUNCIMAN PLAN

who arrived at the park gates were turned away with the statement that they would be given no information.

Lord Runciman was six hours at Rothenhaus Castle, and had a long talk with Henlein. Necessary though the meeting doubtless was, it only confirmed the Czechs in their belief that the British mission boded no good to the Republic. This feeling was intensified among those who knew something of the personal history of Lord Runciman's host at Rothenhaus.

Prince Max Egon von Hohenlohe-Langenburg is a citizen of the Principality of Liechtenstein. His brothers, Prince Rudolf and Prince Karl, are Reich Germans. The estate in Czechoslovakia extended to what was, before Munich, the German frontier. Prince Max Egon's wife is daughter of a Spanish grandee, her maiden name being nothing less than Marie Piedad de Iturbe Marquesa de Belvis de las Napas. She and her family have, or had, extensive estates in Spain. Their lands lay in the territory controlled at that time by the Republican Government of Spain. Ex-King Alfonso of Spain has stayed at Rothenhaus Castle. "Prince Max Egon's interest in politics," said one Prague newspaper, "dates from the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War." With this background, it was hardly surprising that the Prince should have many times welcomed Henlein as a guest at the castle.

The Runciman-Henlein meeting was followed by one between the Sudeten leader and Mr Ashton-Gwatkin at Marienbad on August 22. Two days later Mr Ashton-Gwatkin left for London to report to the Foreign Office. By this time it was clear that the results of three weeks' work by the British mission were precisely nil. The S.d.P. negotiating committee had met the Government on August 17. Herr Kundt had said definitely, "The suggestions submitted by the Government show an unbridgeable gulf. They are based on diametrically opposed views." The negotiations were, on the same day, suspended. The meetings with Henlein brought about no change in the situation. The S.d.P. refused to abate their demands by one word. They insisted that they must have territorial

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

autonomy, and nothing less. The Government was prepared to make almost any concession except this. Here was the "unbridgeable gulf," which it was Lord Runciman's job to close up. This was his task as 'mediator.' If he had succeeded in persuading *both* sides, the S.d.P. as well as the Czechs, to make concessions in the interests of a settlement the mediation would have been fairly accomplished. But, in fact, this never happened. Since the S.d.P. refused to budge from their position all that Lord Runciman and the British Government did was to drive the Czechs into continual retreat. Let there be no doubt about this point: the Henleinists never made one *single* step towards reaching a settlement.

THE RUNCIMAN PLAN

make war inevitable. Once war had actually started it would undoubtedly have been exceedingly difficult for Britain to keep out. British efforts were, therefore, primarily directed to deflecting both Germany and Czechoslovakia from the path which would lead to war. It was quickly realized that not much impression could be made on Hitler. With the Czechs, however, there were far greater possibilities. Since the ostensible cause of friction was inside Czechoslovakia, Britain, as a possible ally of the Republic in the event of war, had a certain right to intervene to prevent war. Further, Czechoslovakia, a small state, had no means of resisting pressure such as Germany had. The easiest way to prevent the head-on crash was then clearly indicated. To deflect the Czechoslovak Government from its opposition to Germany was, therefore, the chief aim of the Runciman mission. The justice or otherwise of the Sudeten case and of the Czech case was not the primary consideration.

At the same time it must in fairness be admitted that the British Government appear at first to have believed that it might be possible to satisfy Germany's demands by some arrangement short of actual territorial cession, even if the satisfaction were only temporary. I do not think that any responsible person ever believed that the granting of territorial autonomy to the Sudeten Germans within the frontiers of the Republic would constitute a lasting settlement. But it might have worked for six months or a year. This, I think, was what Lord Runciman hoped to obtain. And this is what the so-called "Fourth Plan" of the Czechoslovak Government would have provided. Lord Runciman himself says :

In my opinion—and, I believe, in the opinion of the more responsible Sudeten leaders—this plan embodied almost all the requirements of the "Karlsbad eight points," and with a little clarification and extension could have been made to cover them in their entirety. Negotiations should have at once been resumed on this favourable and hopeful basis. . . .¹

The negotiations were never resumed, and Lord Runciman blames what he calls the 'extremists' in the S.d.P. for the

¹ Correspondence respecting Czechoslovakia, September 1938. Cmd. 5847, p. 4.

failure to reach a settlement on the basis of the Fourth Plan. He can hardly have been surprised at the failure, since he tacitly admits that the voice of the 'extremists' was the voice of Berlin. It appears probable, however, that Lord Runciman did, to begin with, have some hope of persuading the Henleinists to accept a settlement within Czechoslovakia, as being actually more in their own interests. In this hope he was no doubt encouraged by those whom he terms "the more responsible Sudeten leaders." The mistake was, as so many Czechs knew full well, to attribute any liberty of action to the Henleinist leaders, whatever their political complexion. The negotiations were almost foredoomed to failure, because one of the parties was little more than a ventriloquist's puppet.

It is true that an arrangement as proposed in the Fourth Plan would not have been lasting, and would, in the near future, have given rise to a crisis similar in character to the annexation of Austria. None the less, such an arrangement would undoubtedly have been more welcome to the British Government. It could easily have been invested with the semblance of justice, and would have been accepted by British opinion with much less grimacing than was the Munich Agreement.

The 'Fourth Plan' idea would have muffled the shock of Germany's absorption of Czechoslovakia; it would have crippled the Czechs by easy stages instead of in one violent operation.

One big question was not covered by the "Karlsbad eight points," nor, naturally, by the Fourth Plan. This was the question of Czechoslovakia's alliance with the U.S.S.R. Lord Runciman's letter to the Prime Minister deals also with this point. Now it is, on reflection, rather curious that Lord Runciman should have occupied himself also with Czechoslovakia's foreign relations. When Mr Chamberlain announced the decision to send Lord Runciman to Prague as a 'mediator' no mention whatever was made of this question of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Pact. The 'mediation' was to be between the Sudeten Germans and the Czechoslovak Government. The foreign policy of the

Republic was not involved. Indeed, Lord Runciman himself admits that his job was only concerned with the internal S.d.P.-Czech conflict: "It was not part of my function to attempt mediation between Czechoslovakia and Germany."¹ Despite this admission, Lord Runciman made the most far-reaching proposals regarding Czechoslovakia's foreign policy—proposals which, taken in conjunction with British cold-shouldering of the U.S.S.R. in the final settlement, led many persons in Czechoslovakia to accept the widespread belief that the present British Government is almost as hostile to Russia as the confessedly anti-Bolshevik Powers. The Czechoslovak Communist Party from the beginning believed that one of the objects of Lord Runciman's mission was to break, or, at the very least, weaken, the Czechoslovak-Soviet pact. On August 10 the *Rote Fahne*, official organ of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, claimed to have been informed by a prominent member of the British Liberal Party that Lord Runciman's "chief efforts in Prague will be in the direction of weakening as much as possible the Czechoslovak-Russian alliance. He has received special instructions from Chamberlain in this respect."

All well-informed, right-thinking people who saw this report naturally dismissed it as nonsense—as yet another piece of Communist ineptitude. Yet the *Rote Fahne* was proved right. The second of Lord Runciman's recommendations regarding Czechoslovakia's foreign policy is

That the Czechoslovak Government should so remodel her foreign relations as to give assurances to her neighbours that she will in no circumstances attack them or enter into any aggressive action against them arising from obligations to other states.²

This generalized statement means, in the first place, that Czechoslovakia should give up her alliances with the U.S.S.R. and with France, both of which were defensive measures against Czechoslovakia's chief neighbour, Germany. And this is precisely what has happened.

There was further evidence of hostility, not perhaps

¹ Cmd. 5847, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

² Cmd. 5847, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

specifically to the Soviet Union, but at least to the anti-Fascist idea which the U.S.S.R. outstandingly represents, in the first of Lord Runciman's recommendations :

That those parties and persons in Czechoslovakia who have been deliberately encouraging a policy antagonistic to Czechoslovakia's neighbours should be forbidden by the Czechoslovak Government to continue their agitations ; and that, if necessary, legal measures should be taken to bring such agitations to an end.¹

This very cautious, generalized statement can mean little to those who are unfamiliar with the internal politics of Czechoslovakia. But for those who are it is nothing less than a statement that Czechoslovakia should become an authoritarian, pro-Nazi, pro-Fascist state. The "parties and persons" so vaguely referred to naturally included, in the first place, the Czechoslovak Communist Party. This party was duly forbidden by the Czech and Slovak Governments very shortly after Munich. But the matter did not end there. To begin with, it is necessary to realize that the Czechoslovak Communist Party, despite its voting strength—it was the third biggest of the non-German parties—had very little influence in the political life of the country. It was nominally in the Opposition, but since the Government was itself anti-Fascist the Communists really had little ground for active agitation. Much more important than the Communist Party was the Czechoslovak Social Democrat Party, second partner in the Government Coalition, and represented in the Cabinet by the Vice-Premier, the Minister of Justice, and the Minister of Social Welfare. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was also largely permeated by Social Democrats. This party would also have to be included among the recipients of Lord Runciman's disfavour. It too was anti-Fascist, and must be reckoned as having encouraged "a policy antagonistic to Czechoslovakia's neighbours." Much the same applied to the third and fourth Coalition parties, the Czechoslovak National Socialists and the Czech Clericals. Finally, since the Czechoslovak-Soviet Alliance was considered "antagon-

¹ Cmd. 5847, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

THE RUNCIMAN PLAN

istic " by Germany, and the Little Entente " antagonistic " by Hungary, even President Beneš, who was the chief promoter of these two systems, was, according to Lord Runciman, to be suppressed.

In short, the " parties and persons " who were to be forbidden " to continue their agitations " comprised nearly the whole of the Government and the President of the Republic himself. The only " parties and persons " who did not qualify for Lord Runciman's proposed ban were the German, Hungarian, and Polish minority parties, certain small Czechoslovak Fascist groups, and a section of the Agrarian Party.

Lord Runciman's recommendations have been put into effect : President Beneš is in exile ; the Social Democrats and other parties, whether absorbed into the new National Unity Party of the Government or into the nominal Opposition, the National Labour Party, can only exist by promising to renounce " antagonism " ; the Communist Party has been finally prohibited ; the alliances with France and the U.S.S.R. are cancelled, and the Little Entente is defunct.

These matters are, admittedly, precisely what Germany really wanted. The Sudeten quarrel was merely the pretext for action. Yet when the question of British intervention was put before the House of Commons the emphasis was all on this insignificant minority quarrel. There was no indication that Lord Runciman's mission in Prague was to make suggestions for the reconstruction of the whole internal and external policy of Czechoslovakia, that he was to be the agent for *Germany's* plans and wishes. Yet this is, in fact, what he did become. His own words prove it. There is not the slightest difference between the recommendations to the Prime Minister and Germany's own designs in Czechoslovakia, as reiterated unceasingly since 1936.

It is difficult, indeed impossible, to believe that such vital changes as those proposed by Lord Runciman—and endorsed by the British Government—were solely the outcome of his experiences and investigations during his brief stay in Czechoslovakia. Issues in British policy of infinitely

less world-wide importance, in Palestine, for instance, or in India, have called for months and years of investigation by elaborate Royal Commissions before decisions could be taken. Is it not surprising, then, that the most important question in European affairs since 1918 should ostensibly have been settled on the basis of a six weeks' inquiry by one or two men? Is it not much more likely that the decision, at least in its main outlines, had already been taken before ever Lord Runciman set foot in Prague? And that Lord Runciman was not an 'investigator' or 'mediator,' but an agent for persuading Czechoslovakia to carry out changes which had already been deemed necessary?

To sum up, it seems to me, on the basis of the evidence, that the real purpose of Lord Runciman's mission may be set down as follows :

1. At all costs to prevent the Czechs going to war with Germany.
2. To do this by inducing the Czechs to yield to German demands, since there was no means of making Germany give way.
3. If possible, to save the territorial integrity of Czechoslovakia by persuading the Sudeten Germans that it was in their interest to accept a settlement within the Republic.

(iii) CZECHOSLOVAK OFFERS AND HENLEINIST OBSTRUCTION

The Third Plan.—The first mutterings of the storm which burst during the last week of September began to be perceptible in Prague during the third week of August. On the 21st the Government had broadcast a statement indicating that the situation was very grave, and preparing the public for the worst by stating that a "serious and thoroughgoing solution" must be found. Between August 25 and September 5 two drafts of a plan for such a solution were worked out by the Government and presented to the Sudeten German Party. Both drafts show how much the Henleinists could have obtained if they had genuinely desired a settlement with the Czechoslovak Government.

What was known as the Third Plan, the chief feature of

THE RUNCIMAN PLAN

which was the division of the country into cantons, appears to have been chiefly sponsored by Prime Minister Hodža. News of its existence leaked out on August 25. Political opponents of the Premier asserted that he had ruined the plan's chances of acceptance by premature disclosure of its contents. It was alleged that in his desire to obtain credit for the scheme he made the plan known before it had actually been fully drafted, thus enabling the S.d.P. to reject it in advance and to wreck the exceedingly light and tenuous improvement in the atmosphere which Lord Runciman was said to have brought about. Events certainly seemed to lend colour to this charge against the Prime Minister.

In the afternoon of the 26th the Cabinet met with Dr Hodža to settle still outstanding points in the proposed scheme. In the evening, after the Cabinet meeting, I was sent for by the head of the Foreign Office news agency, who was anxious to give me the correct version of the scheme for publication in England. No official text of the plan was ever published, and it may therefore be of interest to set down here the essentials of what I was told. These may be summarized under four heads :

1. *Administrative.* The scheme envisaged the division of Czechoslovakia into twenty or more cantons or *départements*. The cantons would be so defined as to ensure the greatest degree of national homogeneity within each one. The idea was to reduce as much as possible differences of nationality within each local administrative unit. Each canton was to be governed by a council elected in strict conformity with the nationality divisions within its area. Thus a canton containing 80 per cent. Germans and 20 per cent. Czechs would have similar representation on its administrative body. It was intended that in the Sudeten area several cantons would have been almost 100 per cent. German. There would have been some cases in which a few isolated German villages were included in mainly Czech cantons ; but to balance this there were cantons with perhaps 5 per cent. Czechs surrounded by Germans. Such conditions could not by any ingenuity be avoided, so intermixed are the two races.

2. *Language.* There was to be complete equality of the German and Czech languages throughout the state. This would have meant in practice that every German would have been able to use his language in official business anywhere in Czechoslovakia, instead of as previously only in regions with over 20 per cent. German population.

The working out of this offer would have been extremely complicated, and would have taken time to bring to completion. It would have meant a big shifting around of German-speaking officials, the appointment of many new ones, and the pensioning of many existing ones, if every railway-station, every post-office, every tax office, throughout the country was to have German-speaking officials on its staff. None the less, the Government were prepared to do it.

3. *Employment of Germans.* To implement this second point was the offer rapidly to increase the numbers of Germans employed in all branches of the public service up to 22 per cent. of the total—i.e., to the proportion of the Germans in the total population. The quotas for the admission of Germans were to be increased so as to make up for whatever deficiencies there had been in the past.

4. *Economic assistance.* Measures of economic assistance were to be taken for the distressed German areas. For this purpose it was expected that a foreign loan would be floated.

That was the outline of the Government's Third Plan as communicated to me on August 26. It is plain to anyone that it was a very generous offer—one which the S.d.P. could easily have accepted if the remedying of local grievances was really the issue. In fact, the plan never got a hearing.

On the very same day—the 26th—that the Cabinet were meeting to put the final touches to the draft the Henleinists wrecked any chances of negotiation by publishing an open incitement to violence, justified apparently by the alleged discovery of a Communist plot. It was the old trick—the infallible 'Zinoviev letter' stunt. Perhaps it did not work so well as its prototype, but it sufficed. The Henleinist proclamation said :

THE RUNCIMAN PLAN

Recent attacks on our comrades and on members of the national group by Marxist terrorists prove that it is not a question of accidental individual cases, but of deliberate measures by our Marxist opponents. The attempt is being made to give foreign observers the impression that there is here an opposition to our movement which must be taken seriously, and which would be ready and capable of maintaining itself as a political factor by the use of force. Our Marxist opponents are thereby attempting to conceal their actual insignificance in the Sudeten area and to attract attention to themselves by attacks and deliberately prepared incidents. Hitherto our supporters, in accordance with our instructions, have patiently suffered these attacks, and even renounced the legal right to self-defence, in order to prevent any misinterpretation of such incidents.

In view of recent developments the leadership of the party considers itself as no longer in the position to take responsibility for the liberty and property of its members. It therefore withdraws the previous instructions to renounce the right to self-defence, and leaves its members free to make use of this right in all cases in which they are attacked. It merely instructs comrades strictly to observe the legal regulations and restrictions. The legal advisers are herewith requested to give officers the necessary information on this point.

The instructions were signed by Herr Frank, Henlein's personal deputy, and by Dr Köllner, the party organizer.

The Henleinist papers supported this encouragement to violence by publishing what was alleged to be a facsimile of a Communist manifesto. This stated that Lord Runciman's policy in Czechoslovakia was to break the Czechoslovak-Soviet alliance, and to secure the banning of Communism in Czechoslovakia. The manifesto called on party members to resist this policy by illegal means, if necessary.

This alleged manifesto was, in fact, a forgery. The man responsible for it was traced by the Czech police, and the sum paid for it by the Henleinist party was also known. It was a clever forgery in the sense that, as we have already seen, the Czechoslovak Communist Party did so judge the purpose of Lord Runciman's mission, but it was stupid in attributing to the Communists plans for illegal action. Probably no Communist party in Europe was as well disciplined as that in Czechoslovakia. And it always took

especial pains to impress upon its members the necessity of not embarrassing the Government by violence or illegal action of any other kind.

The Henleinists reckoned, however, that the widespread unreasoning prejudice against Communism would ensure belief for their story. This may have been the case outside Czechoslovakia; but the Prague Government was not impressed. It promptly replied with an energetic warning, broadcast in German, of the consequences which would follow from the application of the S.d.P. instructions. After quoting the reference to "the right to self-defence," the Government statement said :

These words show that the two signatories of the proclamation, Dr Franz Köllner and Herr Karl Frank, have taken upon themselves a *rôle* for which they do not possess the slightest authorization. The Czechoslovak Ministry of the Interior, officers of which know exactly the causes and originators of the so-called incidents, declares authoritatively that the proclamation is devoid of any serious basis whatever.

In the event of the proclamation being used by anyone to occasion a threat to public peace and order, whoever acts in the spirit of this proclamation will encounter severe and energetic action on the part of the State security services.

We draw the attention of the public to the fact that even the distribution of this proclamation is a contravention of the law. Order and peace in the Republic will be maintained by the responsible organs of the State security services, and not by any illegal self-defence.

Thanks to the firm line taken by the Government, the Henleinist proclamation remained, for the moment at least, a dead-letter. During the days immediately following there was not more than the usual amount of tension in the Sudeten districts, which expressed itself in the—by this time—commonplace tavern brawls and street scuffles. The allegation of a Communist plot did not apparently have much effect on official opinion in Britain. The Foreign Office issued a statement welcoming the Third Plan and deploring the S.d.P. proclamation. Sir John Simon's speech at Lanark on August 27 also showed that the British attitude remained unchanged.

THE RUNCIMAN PLAN

Nevertheless, the chances of an agreement showed not the slightest sign of coming nearer. By this time the forthcoming Nürnberg Nazi Party Congress, due to open on September 5, was casting its shadow before it. Every one in Prague expected the gathering storm to break some time during the week of the Congress, or else immediately after it. Czechoslovakia and Britain alike realized the necessity of speedy and determined effort to lay down the basis of a settlement within the few days that remained.

During the week-end, August 27-28, there was a burst of diplomatic activity. Mr B. C. Newton, the British Minister in Prague, left the Legation for some unknown destination, in an atmosphere of great secrecy. Most journalists in Prague were given to understand that the Minister was spending his week-end in the quiet of the Bohemian countryside. I happened to learn from a 100 per cent. reliable source that Mr Newton had gone to London, and duly reported this fact to my paper. The Foreign Office, however, thought fit to deny the statement. The same week-end Lord Runciman spent with another of his aristocratic German acquaintances, Count Clary-Aldringen, at his castle in Teplitz-Schönau. Here he met Henlein, and apparently made a considerable effort to persuade the Sudeten leader of the advisability of starting negotiations again with the Government on the basis of the Third Plan, or something like it. An enlargement of the plan which was being mooted at this stage was to link the German cantons in the proposed scheme in some kind of exclusively German confederation.

The efforts by the Czechs and by Lord Runciman to stave off the impending explosion at Nürnberg were continued vigorously, for at this time both the British Government and the Czechs had information that Hitler intended to demand a plebiscite on the question of handing over the Sudeten country to the Reich. On Monday, the 29th, Mr Newton returned to Prague, bringing with him the latest instructions from the Government. On Wednesday Lord Runciman tried persuasion again, this time with Herr Kundt, and Mr Ashton-Gwatkin tackled Henlein.

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

By now it was clear that the Sudeten German Party had received instructions to sit tight and just obstruct until further orders. The Henleinists were, in fact, simply playing the fish until the "Big H" was ready to land it. For instance, on Wednesday the S.d.P. calmly put out a *communiqué* stating that the party had received no new proposals from the Government, and could not therefore say whether or not it was prepared to resume negotiations. For the Henleinists, apparently, the Third Plan did not exist.

For a little while British efforts to bring the Henleinists to reason appeared to be having some success. Lord Runciman persuaded Henlein to go to Berchtesgaden and personally ask Hitler what he thought about the question of resuming negotiations. The Sudeten leader motored off, was kept waiting at his hotel a day, and finally had a three hours' talk with Hitler. The official *communiqué* merely stated that

... at the wish of Lord Runciman Herr Henlein gave the Führer a survey of the present state of the negotiations with the Prague Government. The Führer took note of the explanation with interest. Full identity of views was established in the judgment of the situation.

The Czechs laughed when they read the last sentence. It was, as one paper said, "a meaningless truism."

Nevertheless, by the evening of September 2, when Henlein was on his way back to Czechoslovakia, the outlook did seem a little more hopeful. During the day President Beneš, who was now more and more replacing Dr Hodža in the conduct of the discussions, had a four hours' talk with two members of the S.d.P. negotiating committee. At the meeting the Henleinists told the President that they could not accept the proposed cantonal scheme as it stood, but that they were prepared to continue negotiations "in the line of the 'Karlsbad eight demands.' " It was officially announced that the meeting was to be continued on the following Monday. The feeling of moderate optimism continued over the week-end. On Sunday, September 4, Mr Ashton-Gwatkin visited Henlein at his home in Asch and had a three hours' talk with him. The meeting took

THE RUNCIMAN PLAN

place in the morning. Mr Ashton-Gwatkin returned immediately to Prague, informed Lord Runciman, and then went with him to the British Legation. Early in the evening I called at the Hôtel Alcron and saw Mr Stopford, who said, on behalf of his colleague, "Well, the meeting was not unsatisfactory. I don't want to exaggerate the value of it, but, anyway, the talk was a friendly one."

Mr Ashton-Gwatkin sent Lord Halifax, via the Legation in Prague, a report of the talk with Henlein. The sense of the report was understood to be that the situation was still fluid, and that nothing in the way of an ultimatum had so far been presented by the Germans. In the circumstances I felt justified in reporting that

Restrained optimism describes the outlook here for the negotiations between the Government and the Sudeten German Party. . . . Since the talks are to continue it is assumed that no drastic decision was taken at Herr Hitler's mountain villa.

In fact, however, even this degree of hopefulness was unjustified. All that had happened, I believe, was that Hitler had not at that moment made up his mind. He was still balancing the rival advantages of an apparently conciliatory move and of a ruthless forward policy. The Sudeten German Party itself was speaking with two voices. On the very Sunday that Mr Ashton-Gwatkin had his "friendly" talk with Henlein a S.d.P. deputy, Herr Wollner, declared at an afternoon meeting—which was attended by Henlein—that no compromise was possible. "The 'Karlsbad demands,'" he said, "are only the beginning of the settlement. They are not the last demands, but only the first that the Sudeten Germans will make. What is more, the Sudeten Germans are not alone in their fight. They have 76,000,000 Germans behind them."

In Germany itself further discouraging omens were not wanting. Military preparations were being continued with unabated zest, as were newspaper attacks on the Czechs. On the Sunday the Berlin *Nachtausgabe* declared :

The only thing that really matters during the next few days is that the Czechoslovak Government shall once and for

all provide an unconditional and honourable basis for granting full autonomy to the national groups within the country.

The Fourth Plan.—In the meantime the Czechoslovak Government, in accordance with its desire to show definite possibility of an agreement before Hitler spoke at Nürnberg, had been enlarging the Third Plan, and on September 5 the Czechs' fourth and final offer was agreed upon by the Government at a meeting which began at 6 P.M. and lasted till nearly midnight.

The same evening Henlein and other Sudeten German Party leaders, who had been meeting at Eger, issued a statement declaring : " All reports received show that the situation can only be changed by a quick and comprehensive fulfilment of Henlein's ' eight Karlsbad demands.' "

This was a direct challenge. The question was, then, did the Government's Fourth Plan accept the " eight points " ? I telephoned a friend in the Foreign Office while the Cabinet session was still going on. The answer was, yes—" as a basis of negotiation " the eight demands were accepted. That was Lord Runciman's advice, and it had been taken. No further details of the Fourth Plan were obtainable that night. Lord Runciman, whose suggestions made in almost daily meetings with President Beneš had been incorporated in the plan, was informed of its final contents.

The next day the main points of the Czech offer became known. They were :

1. Recommendation of the principle of proportional employment of officials according to the quota of the population for existing and new appointments.

2. Employment of officials in the districts of their own nationality.

3. Local regions to have police of their own nationality.

4. A new linguistic law based on the complete equality of languages.

5. Assistance in the industrial life of the German districts that had been most hit by the crisis, especially a loan of £5,000,000 on advantageous conditions.

6. Equality of national status on the basis of national

THE RUNCIMAN PLAN

autonomy by the introduction of a system of cantons. By this means persons of German nationality will enjoy self-government within those territorial limits where the German population shows a majority. The principle is laid down that all questions that do not concern national unity will be dealt with locally. The integrity of the frontier and the unity of the state shall receive effective guarantees.

7. Special sections for cantons shall be created in all the central administrations which will be run by nationals who will deal with matters affecting their own nationality.

8. The national rights of citizens shall be protected by special laws, and the elected representatives of various nationalities in the representative bodies shall have the right of complaint against any interference with the rights or interest of their special nationals. Special registers shall be established for each nationality.

9. Immediate measures shall be taken to reach agreement upon those points which do not require legislative measures. Any new laws will be prepared with the collaboration of the Sudeten German Party. The proposals will be laid before Parliament, and will be brought into force as quickly as possible.¹

In my story to London that evening I added further :

I learn on the very best authority that Lord Runciman has advised the British Government to support the Czechoslovak Government's Fourth Plan. . . . In fact, if not in phraseology, it satisfies everything contained in the Karlsbad Programme.

That this was certainly the case is borne out by Lord Runciman's own comments, which deserve to be repeated :

In my opinion—and, I believe, in the opinion of the more responsible Sudeten leaders—this plan embodied almost all the requirements of the " Karlsbad eight points," and with a little clarification and extension could have been made to cover them in their entirety.

Here, then, was the chance of an agreement. Henlein, as Mr Ashton-Gwatkin had found, was not undisposed to show a little conciliatoriness. It is true that the attitude

¹ For text of official summary see Appendix II.

of Herr Wollner was not encouraging—but then Herr Wollner was not the leader of the Sudeten German Party ; he was not even a member of the negotiating committee. An attempt to dislodge Henlein, on grounds of weakness or defeatism, could hardly have been carried through at that moment without fatal effects on the unity of the party. A little energetic support of the Czechoslovak Government at this stage might have worked wonders. But at the last moment the whole opportunity was wrecked by a few words in a newspaper which is widely believed to represent the views of the British Government—*The Times*. The effect of those few words and their immediate sequel were explosively dramatic.

At half-past eight on the morning of Wednesday, September 8, Herr Kundt, chief negotiator of the Sudeten German Party, received at his private house in Prague a thick envelope containing the draft of the Government's new plan, together with a covering letter from Prime Minister Hodža. Herr Kundt read the communication over breakfast. At 11 A.M. the other members of the negotiating committee assembled and discussed the plan. At 12.30 Herr Kundt and a colleague saw Dr Hodža, and told him that the S.d.P. would consider the plan and let him know later. Shortly after lunch the Henleinist leaders met. They decided, according to their own *communiqué*, "to continue the negotiations with the Government on the basis of the plan, and from the point of view of the realization of the 'Karlsbad eight demands.' " The *communiqué* also paid a tribute to the fourth Plan in saying :

The Government's proposal will certainly give the Sudeten German population the impression that it will be taken seriously by the Government, in respect too of the carrying out of the individual points.

The Sudeten German negotiators had, however, probably not seen the leading article which had appeared in that morning's *Times*. Or if they had they were playing an exceedingly Janus-like rôle. For on this very critical day *The Times* put forward a suggestion for nothing less than

THE RUNCIMAN PLAN

territorial cession to Germany—an idea which the S.d.P. had never at any time put forward. Said *The Times* :

... it might be worth while for the Czechoslovak Government to consider whether they should exclude altogether the project, which has found favour in some quarters, of making Czechoslovakia a more homogeneous state by the secession of that fringe of alien populations who are contiguous to the nation with which they are united by race.

This proposal, quietly formulated as though nothing more vital were at stake than an academic problem, aroused consternation in Prague—in British circles as well as in Czech—glee in Berlin, and amazement throughout the whole world. It is not too much to say that this article sabotaged the chances of the Czechs' final offer. Not only was Germany delighted, but so also were the Hungarians and Poles. They pounced upon the plural of 'alien populations,' and saw that *The Times*—and therefore, they reckoned, the British Government—was not more opposed to their claims than to those of Germany. It was in vain that the British Foreign Office denied that the *Times* suggestion represented the views of the British Government. In Germany von Ribbentrop and others knew well how carefully pondered such articles are—knew well who were the guiding spirits behind them, and what their contacts with the Government were. *The Times* had given Germany her cue, and she picked it up without a moment's delay.

While the meeting of the S.d.P. leaders was in progress during the afternoon of September 7 I was sitting in the lobby of the Hôtel Alcron with two other newspaper correspondents discussing the situation. A little before five o'clock we were surprised to see Herr Kundt, accompanied by two or three of his associates, come hurrying in. My colleagues and I went over to the Germans. Kundt was looking pale and strained.

"We must see Lord Runciman," he said. "There has been some fighting at Mährisch-Ostrau with the Czech police. One of our deputies has been hurt."

"What was the deputy doing there?" some one asked.

"Some Germans have been arrested for arms-smuggling.

He was making inquiries. . . . It's very serious. It must be cleared up. . . ."

With that Kundt and his colleagues hastened upstairs to see Lord Runciman.

It did not take long to establish what had actually happened. The arms-smuggling from Germany I had known about for some days. It had become so rampant in the Moravská Ostrava (Mährisch-Ostrau) district that the police had determined to make a thorough clearance, and had rounded up eighty-two suspects, following the seizure of two lorry-loads of firearms and ammunition. These arrests had been made several days previously. It was not until the precise moment when negotiations on the Fourth Plan were about to begin, not until the *Times* article had been read in Berlin, that Henleinist deputies suddenly decided that they must 'investigate' arrests which had, of course, always been perfectly well known to them. It was significant too that the deputy who led the 'investigation' was none other than Franz Köllner, the S.d.P. organizer who had issued the provocative 'self-defence' manifesto a few days previously. Now he and another deputy, Franz May, had sent an hysterical telegram to Prime Minister Hodža, saying :

Mounted police are taking brutal action with riding-whips against peaceful men and women who are gathered at Mährisch-Ostrau to welcome members of Parliament. We members of Parliament, in spite of showing our passes, are being threatened with riding-whips, thrashed, and pushed against walls by the horses of the police. We protest passionately against this brutal and offensive action of the State police, and we demand the punishment of those responsible.

This telegram conveniently omitted to state that the deputy Franz May, who had been struck once with a riding-whip, was at the time he was hit holding a Czech official by the throat. Moreover, the policeman who struck Herr May had no means of knowing he was a deputy, because May had apparently not shown his pass. It was an old trick of S.d.P. deputies to provoke incidents by involving themselves in clashes with the police. The occasion for this one

THE RUNCIMAN PLAN

had been provided by sending out F.S. men to collect a crowd of demonstrators in front of the Law Courts. Some 200 people had assembled and greeted Köllner and May with the Nazi salute. Police tried to move the crowd away, and some minor scuffles immediately followed. In fact, no one was hurt, and six persons arrested were quickly released. The whole affair had been widely exaggerated in Köllner's telegram, but it was his version, communicated to Herr Kundt, that brought the latter in haste to the Hôtel Alcron, and which led to the breaking off of negotiations.

A *communiqué* issued by the S.d.P. later the same night offered a faint hope that the negotiations might be resumed when the Moravská Ostrava incident had been cleared up. In fact, no serious effort was ever made by the Henleinists to continue the talks. Lord Runciman was understating, if anything, the facts in saying :

It is my belief that the incident arising out of the visit of certain Sudeten German deputies to investigate into the case of persons arrested for arms-smuggling at Mährisch-Ostrau was used in order to provide an excuse for the suspension, if not for the breaking off, of negotiations.

On the evening of September 7 the omens for the future were bad. A S.d.P. statement that the Czechoslovak Government was "not sufficiently master of the situation" looked ominous. Another threatening sign was the fact that during the afternoon and evening the "Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro," official German news agency, put out a steadily growing stream of alleged 'news' stories and commentaries vilifying the Czechs in every possible way. By the next day an epidemic of incidents had begun in the Sudeten districts. They were the preliminaries to the Henleinist *putsch* on September 12.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HENLEINIST PUTSCH

ANY hope for reasonableness from the Henleinists which still lingered among the Czechs on September 7 was rapidly crushed out on the following day. The change that had come over the Germans since Mr Ashton-Gwatkin's interview with Henlein only four days earlier was complete—and the change had taken place within twenty-four hours of the publication of *The Times* article. Where before had been hesitation, a disposition not to push things too far, to compromise, now was open defiance of Czechoslovakia, a full-throated "No!" to the Fourth Plan. Field-Marshal Goering's *National-Zeitung* said the proposals were useless. The *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* declared that a comparison with Henlein's "eight point programme" showed how little there was in the plan which was concrete and substantial. Commenting on the Moravská Ostrava incident, the *Völkischer Beobachter* said :

. . . the complete lack of self-control and the wild Hussite spirit of the Czech police and soldiery may produce an extremely grave situation. The inactivity of the Prague Government towards the conduct of its police and soldiery shows that it is no longer master of the instruments of State authority which should guarantee security and order.

The Sudeten German Party itself put out a long, highly-coloured statement repeating the charge that the Czechoslovak authorities could no longer control their police officials, and giving alleged details of how Sudeten Germans were being ill-treated in the prisons. The similarity of argument between the S.d.P. statement and the Reich Press caused no surprise among Czech officials, though it increased their pessimism about the future.

In order to provide illustrative material for the German

THE HENLEINIST PUTSCH

argument, demonstrations were staged that Thursday evening in two Sudeten towns.

At Freiwaldau—one of the most notorious gun-running centres—F.S. men got together in the market-place a considerable crowd who proceeded to sing *Deutschland über Alles* and the Nazi anthem, the Horst Wessel song. These Sudetens then demonstrated the brutal oppression from which they were suffering by surrounding a solitary police inspector and hustling him to the police-station, which they tried to enter. The demonstrators were prevented from doing so, and they then departed to the local municipality, where a Henleinist official addressed them.

At Krumau 4000 Sudeten Germans from the town and surrounding villages were brought together to listen to an address by a party functionary. Demonstrators shouted the Nazi slogan, "One Reich, one People, one Führer!" and "We want to be home in the Reich!" The crowd then pushed through a police-cordon to a neighbouring street, where the Social Democrats were holding a counter demonstration. To the satisfaction of the Henleinists, there was duly a clash between the two sets of Germans and the police in which one of the demonstrators was knocked down and injured.

These two demonstrations set the pattern for the next few days.

Friday and Saturday brought their crop of demonstrations, almost all alike in being designed to provoke the police and local Czechs or non-Henleinist Germans. In Bodenbach, for example, 3000 youthful members of the S.d.P. threw stones and beer mugs and chairs at the police, wounding several of them. Two Czechs and a German Social Democrat were attacked and injured. There were similar scenes in Friedberg, Gablonz, Teplitz-Schönau, and Fischern, near Karlsbad. At Hultschin a bomb exploded in the Czech infants' school. At Weidenau, on the Silesian frontier, a man was arrested in possession of a bundle of pamphlets attacking Czechoslovakia.

It was impossible to deny that things looked bad. No one paid much attention to a brief meeting on Saturday

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

between Herr Kundt and Dr Hodža, at which they agreed to meet again on Tuesday—the day after Hitler's final Nürnberg speech—because on that very Saturday things were being said at Nürnberg which indicated plainly the rising tide of Nazi intractability. Czech friends of mine were justifiably angry at Goering's insulting reference to Czechoslovakia :

We know how unbearable it is that a miserable people—goodness knows where they come from !—should be oppressing a highly civilized people. We know who is backing these ridiculous pygmies in Prague—it is Moscow.

The Czechs, though a small nation, have none of that hypersensitive touchiness towards foreign criticism such as is so often exhibited by the Germans, but they did resent Goering's crude sarcasm.

In striking contrast to the Nürnberg oratory was the calm and dignified speech which President Beneš made over the radio at 6.30 P.M. on Saturday. The speech exemplified all the best qualities of the man and of his nation—the sobriety, the honesty, and the essential reasonableness of the Czechs. Dr Beneš spoke in Czech, Slovak, and German. On the Wenceslas Square thousands stood through a heavy rainstorm to listen to him. He said :

I speak to you at a moment of international difficulties which are the greatest since the World War. . . . I speak to you, above all, as to men who desire peace and order, and who respect human worth and goodwill in others. . . .

After describing the principles and purpose of the Government's final offer Dr Beneš said :

Since we have decided on this solution at a troubled time when mutual confidence is to some extent shaken it is clear that we make no slight sacrifice for the preservation of general peace. . . . We want to contribute to the smoothing out of European differences, we want to contribute to the creation of good collaboration with all our neighbours—above all, with our great neighbour, Germany—we want to give Europe and America—and especially England and France—a proof that we are clear about our duty of general co-operation, and

THE HENLEINIST PUTSCH

that we will fulfil it in the measure permitted by the necessities of the State.

It was impossible not to be moved as Dr Beneš said :

We are living through a time when we all, without distinction of party or nationality, must stand together in order that peace may be kept on this piece of earth where our fathers and their fathers before them lived and laboured in peace for centuries. Shall we, their descendants, shall we Czechoslovaks and Sudeten Germans, destroy where our forefathers built ? . . . It was always the pride of our democracy that it was a disciplined democracy, that it was, in the first place, the self-control of each citizen which ensured peace. Why should it be otherwise to-day ? I desire a complete return to peace and order, in freedom, and in loyal, calm, and disciplined competition with the weapons of discussion and of the spirit. . . . I believe in the real desire of the Sudeten German population for peace and collaboration, just as I know that the Czechs, Slovaks, and all others cherish this desire.

Dr Beneš spoke with the voice of civilization. But the voice of Nürnberg was louder. The day after the President's speech—a Sunday—the Henleinists showed how little they cared for peace and order by staging demonstrations and provoking incidents throughout the Sudeten area. At Eger 2000 S.d.P. members, led by a German senator, broke up a meeting of the Czech Motorists' Defence Committee. Thirteen police and three Czechs were injured.

At Troppau some person unknown fired on a soldier.

At Rumburg, a town on the northern frontier, 2000 S.d.P. members laid siege to a hall where 200 German Social Democrats were meeting, and shouted and booed the occupants of the hall. Police were summoned from the neighbouring town of Böhmisch-Leipa to disperse the crowd.

At Friedensdorf, in Moravia, 150 Germans demonstrated outside the house of the local priest, who, though he spoke German, was a Czech by nationality. The crowd demanded that the priest should leave the town. The priest then walked from his house to the church and prayed, and finally departed for Olomouc, the nearest big town and centre of the bishopric.

In at least fifteen villages and towns in the frontier districts all the demonstrations had a similar character. Crowds collected in the main squares and streets, sang *Deutschland über Alles* and the Horst Wessel song, and then dispersed. In one or two places the demonstrators shouted, "We want a plebiscite !"

The most unwelcome event of the day was an open demonstration by Lord Runciman of his preference for the Henleinists. He was spending the week-end, as usual, with one of the ex-Austrian nobles, Count Czernin, at Petersburg Castle. Five thousand Henleinists, with several hundred uniformed F.S. men, assembled outside the castle, sang and shouted slogans, and were finally addressed by Lord Runciman, who appeared on a balcony of the castle in the company of the notorious Herr Wollner and other Sudeten Parliamentarians.

In Prague the usual Sunday evening crowd that slowly promenaded up and down the Wenceslas Square was larger than usual. Every one was outwardly cheerful, but inwardly anxious about what Hitler's speech on the morrow would bring. Would it be peace or war? That was the unspoken question.

Hitler's speech on Monday in itself contained no answer to the question : peace or war? But an answer of a kind was given that very night in the Sudeten country. Hitler began to speak at 7.15 P.M. With a number of Czech and democratic Sudeten German journalists I listened to the broadcast from Nürnberg. These Czechoslovaks laughed at Hitler's hysterical phrases :

"The misery of the Sudeten Germans is without end. The Czechs want to annihilate them. They are being oppressed in an inhuman and intolerable manner. . . ."

Indeed, to anyone who knew conditions in Czechoslovakia it was impossible not to laugh at the hoarse-throated Führer's wild and fantastic assertions.

At the same time there was no doubt about the scarcely concealed menace in Hitler's words—especially when he said, "I say that if these tortured creatures cannot obtain

THE HENLEINIST PUTSCH

rights and assistance by themselves they can obtain both from us. . . .”

And again : “ I demand that the oppression of 3,500,000 Germans in Czechoslovakia shall cease and be replaced by the right of free self-determination. . . . The Germans of Czechoslovakia are neither defenceless nor are they deserted.”

What these threatening phrases meant was soon revealed. Hitler finished speaking at twenty minutes to nine. Hardly had the massed thousands of Nazis at Nürnberg concluded the singing of the Horst Wessel song when shots started to fly in the Sudeten towns and villages and the Henleinist *putsch* began.

(i) THE FIGHTING IN THE SUDETEN COUNTRY

Rioting, window-smashing, shooting, went on all through the night after Hitler's speech in one place or another in the Sudeten country, and continued on the following day. In Eger a mob of rowdies went round the town smashing all the windows of Czech and Jewish shops. At Asch, Henlein's home-town, a crowd of 8000 marched through the streets, shouting and bawling, tearing down Czech name-plates and whitewashing signposts. They dragged a special constable from his motor-cycle and badly mauled him.

At Schönriesen some one in a crowd of Henleinists fired on a small bunch of Czechs and anti-Henlein Germans. They fired back. Result : two dead. At Pürstein, near Kaaden, a sniper in a church-tower fired at a detachment of the Auxiliary Military Corps. Result : one soldier killed, shot through the stomach. Another soldier fired back, killing an S.d.P. man. At this town 300 Henleinists occupied the railway station, tore down Czech emblems, and hoisted a swastika flag.

Warnsdorf, in Northern Bohemia, was the scene of a mass exodus into Germany. A crowd of over a thousand, shouting “ *Sieg Heil !* ” stormed the customs house, and seized the keys of the frontier gates. Five hundred then marched across the frontier into Germany, where the customs barrier

was already open and a crowd waiting to receive the Sudeten Germans.

In several places motor-cars and lorries containing armed F.S. men roared through village streets, the occupants firing as they got the chance. At Haselbach, for instance, police summoned two fast-travelling cars to stop. From them jumped several men who let off their revolvers at the police and gendarmes, wounding one. Outside Wasser-suppen a motor-lorry was held up. The occupants replied to an order to come out by repeated firing. Gendarmes fired seven shots in reply and then retired. Police reinforcements arriving later found in the lorry the body of its owner—the mayor of a local village.

Where there was no actual shooting mobs stormed law courts, customs posts, police-stations, post-offices, railway stations, smashing windows, attacking Czech officials. Rioting and disorders of one kind or another were reported in twenty-five towns and villages of the Sudeten country.

The disturbances went on the next morning. At Krumau, when a squad of gendarmes were marching through the market-place, the crowd threw stones, and some one fired a revolver. As the gendarmes and police set about clearing the square more shots were fired at them by snipers and more stones were thrown. The trouble began at 1 P.M. At five o'clock in the afternoon martial law was proclaimed, but the town was not quiet till seven. Twenty-five men were arrested and found to be in possession of revolvers, daggers, and life-preservers.

Martial law was proclaimed in eight towns altogether that day. At the same time a general prohibition on public meetings was issued. This applied to any kind of meetings, whether political or not, whether indoor or outdoor, and to all processions, and it was in force throughout the Republic.

Martial law made it possible for the death-penalty to be inflicted for insurrection, and for the sentence to be carried out within two hours of the judgment. In less grave cases it provided for hard-labour sentences up to twenty years. Martial law had not been invoked in Czechoslovakia since the Communist disturbances in 1920. But that it was

THE HENLEINIST PUTSCH

necessary in September 1938 was shown not only by the actual disorders in the Sudetenland, but also by the discovery by the police of an S.d.P. circular addressed to all F.S. men, calling on them to do their utmost to provoke attacks on State officials. If these tactics failed to bring about a decision to hold a plebiscite within fifteen days, said the circular, there would be collective demonstrations and attacks throughout the whole Sudeten area. On September 14 further evidence was obtained by the police. I reported that evening :

Documents indicating that yesterday's disorders in the Sudeten towns were a carefully prepared attempt at a *putsch* were discovered by the police this morning in a raid on the Sudeten Party headquarters at Görkau. Secret instructions from the central offices of the party were found. The papers seized gave detailed orders for the different tasks assigned to individual members of the F.S. In the instructions all F.S. men were ordered to stand by in readiness for September 13.

In addition, revolvers of German make and ammunition were found and quantities of propaganda material. The police search followed information that various documents at the Sudeten Party secretariat were to be burned.

Despite the proclamation of martial law in Eger, Neudek, Elbogen, Karlsbad, Falkenau, Pressnitz, Krumau, and Kaaden—with the exception of Krumau all in North-west Bohemia—fighting continued on Tuesday, and, indeed, became worse in some districts. There was a particularly gruesome affair at Haberspirk, near Falkenau. At half-past one on Tuesday afternoon a crowd of about a hundred S.d.P. men collected outside the police-station and demanded that it should be immediately handed over to them. The chief of the station refused to surrender, and the crowd, armed with pitchforks, axes, and other weapons, launched an attack. An attempt was also made to flood the basement of the station with a fire-hose. When all this failed the wife of the station commander, Pardus, was dragged from her house, bound with rope, dragged along in front of the station, and badly beaten and maltreated. The crowd threatened to kill Mme Pardus if the police did not evacuate the station.

At this point shooting began. One gendarme, Koukola,

was shot dead. Another was wounded. A third was captured, and beaten to death with sticks and clubs. His battered corpse was later picked up out of a stream. When police reinforcements arrived they had to face a fusillade from the windows of neighbouring houses. Two more police-officers were shot dead, and two others wounded. All this time Mme Pardus was left lying, bound, on the ground. Finally, a second lorry-load of police arrived from Karlsbad and a detachment of troops armed with a machine-gun, which, however, it was not necessary to use. By this time the rebels had fled, taking with them the weapons of the shot gendarmes. Two F.S. men were killed in the fighting.

At Schwaderbach, in the Graslitz district, hard against the frontier with Germany, an extraordinary situation arose. In this somewhat isolated pocket of Czechoslovak territory the inhabitants could at any time escape over the border into Germany. In Schwaderbach the F.S. men were armed with machine-guns and hand-grenades brought to them, with the greatest of ease, from Germany. With these weapons the F.S. attacked a small *gendarmerie* and frontier-guard post, kidnapped the Czech officials, and took them over the frontier to Klingenthal.

On Wednesday morning martial law was extended to three more districts. An official statement on the *putsch* said that twenty-three persons had so far been killed—thirteen Czechs and ten Sudeten Germans ; of the Czechs, ten were police. Seventy-five persons had been wounded, of whom only fourteen were Germans. These figures indicated more decisively than anything else could which side had been the aggressor. Said the Government *communiqué* :

In no case have weapons been used, except where it was absolutely necessary. When it is remembered that the aggressors have even made use of machine-guns and hand-grenades it is clear that the Government is fully justified in taking energetic action for the liquidation of this attempt on the peace of the State and of the whole of Europe.

In the afternoon I motored out to the Sudeten country. At Kaaden and Pressnitz, two of the districts under martial

THE HENLEINIST PUTSCH

law, the atmosphere seemed tense and gloomy, as though the people were waiting for more trouble. There were no swastika flags in evidence, nor even a pair of Henleinist white stockings. But in the streets men and youths stood about talking in undertones. There were a few green-uniformed gendarmes, but not so many as I had expected. More noticeable were the signs of military preparations. Along the roads squads of reservists were marching to barracks. Lorries loaded with war material or packed with soldiers roared past. I learned that four or five classes of reservists, between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-one, had been called up.

Despite the outwardly peaceful aspect of the country towns and villages, the evening brought a fierce encounter in the streets of Eger, in which six people were killed. Two neighbouring hotels at Eger, the Viktoria and the Welzl, were used by the Sudeten German Party as their headquarters. The police had information that both hotels were, in fact, arms depots. At half-past six two armoured cars carrying police set out to make a search of the hotels. As the police drew up outside the Hotel Welzl shots cracked out from a second-floor window and from cellar gratings. From behind a petrol pump opposite the hotel came more bullets. The men in the armoured car fired back. Whereupon from the basement of the Hotel Viktoria came the *rat-a-tat* of a machine-gun. With brief intervals, shooting went on for an hour and a half. Finally at eight o'clock the police smashed down the door of the Viktoria with hand-grenades and took possession of the building. One man was found in the cellars—a functionary of the Sudeten German Party. He said that there had been about ten others in the hotel, but they had escaped by the back door. A big dump of Reich German automatics and ammunition was found, and, most interesting of all, an excellently equipped radio transmitting station.

At the Hotel Welzl the shooting stopped at about half-past nine. Apart from the hotel staff, there was no one in the building when the police entered. Outside it, however, no less than six bodies were found in the street. One was the

attendant at the petrol pump opposite the hotel. All the dead had fallen with their faces turned to the hotel, and had evidently been killed by shots from the building.

When I visited Eger three days later the town was still tense and sullen. Two lorries packed with steel-helmeted gendarmes, their rifles with bayonets fixed, toured steadily through the streets. Shop-windows punctured with neat bullet-holes were evidence of the recent lively criss-cross of fire in Eger's main street. Czech, anti-Henlein German, and Jewish shop-windows gaped cavernously, or else had been hastily boarded up. In many cases the owners had evidently left in a hurry. Tumbled cans of fruit, pots of jam, and so forth inside the smashed frontages indicated pillaging. At the Hôtel Viktoria the charred and splintered front door hung from one hinge. Behind the smashed windows a scorched and tattered lace curtain drooped from the end of a tilting curtain-pole. Half a dozen armed police-officers kept watch outside the Viktoria and the Welzl. They would permit no one to approach near enough to take photographs. Opposite the Viktoria, behind some bushes growing in a grass plot, squatted a couple of gendarmes with a machine-gun. On the fence beside them posters in Czech and German informed the populace that the town was under martial law.

There was a moderate number of people in the main street, walking up and down, but talking little. Most of the *cafés* were closed, and those that were open were almost empty.

Outside the Viktoria I talked to one of the local youths. "And why," I said, "was it necessary for the police to fight their way into the hotel? Why didn't some one open and let them in?"

"No one knows," he said sweetly, and turned on a look of blank innocence.

"But your Henlein people," I said, "had a good supply of arms, hadn't they, hidden in the hotel?"

"Oh, no," said the youth. "We had no arms. But the Communists had. The police gave arms to the Communists, and they attacked the hotel."

"And do you believe that?" I said.

"Certainly. It was on the Reich German radio."

It was incredible. Yet this lad was typical of almost every Sudeten German under the age of forty. They would believe anything said by the German radio, the German Press, or by their Henleinist party officials.

I drove on to Falkenau, textile and coal-mining town, reputed among the Czech police to be one of the toughest spots in the Sudeten country. It certainly looked it. A police car with the windscreen shot to bits and the sides perforated like a colander and blood all over it made one think that the Sudeten Germans were hardly the poor, defenceless, downtrodden victims of Czech brutality that they claimed to be. The main square of Falkenau that day was occupied by some thirty army lorries, all packed with troops. I should say there was not one man too many.

The road back to Prague was lined with empty farm-carts, ready for use as barricades, and along the road went lorries and motor-cars laden with bedding, pots and pans, furniture. The exodus of the refugees from the Sudeten country was already well under way.

From what I saw in Eger it was clear that the Henleinist *putsch* had failed. Within three days the Nazi-financed, Nazi-directed, Nazi-armed plot to turn Czechoslovakia into a second Spain had come to a full stop. On September 15—three days after Hitler's Nürnberg speech—Henlein and his lieutenant, Frank, fled to Germany. By that time the arsenals of the rebels had been traced and cleaned up, Czech troops and police were everywhere in control in all the Sudeten districts. While it was obvious that the people of these districts could not indefinitely go about their business under the muzzles of machine-guns, it was equally obvious that the machine-guns would not much longer be necessary. Without large-scale intervention by Germany it was clear that the Henleinists had no means of resuming the insurrection. And, despite the organization in Germany of a so-called Sudeten "Freikorps" of F.S. men who had fled from Czechoslovakia, intervention from over the frontier did not appear likely.

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

On Friday, September 16, the Czechoslovak Government announced that proceedings against Henlein for treason would be taken should he return to the country. At the same time the Sudeten German Party and the F.S. were dissolved. Police marched into the Prague offices of the party, seized all documentary material, and sealed up the rooms. In ninety districts of Bohemia and Moravia all fire-arm licences were cancelled, and the population was ordered to surrender all weapons within twenty-four hours. That was the end of Sudeten-German revolt. The Government was able to announce that, except for isolated, minor incidents, the whole Sudeten country was quiet. In all about seventy people had been killed. Civil war even to that limited degree was thoroughly distasteful to the Czechs. But there is no doubt that only the swift and decisive action of the Czech army and the Czech police forces prevented the revolt flaring into something much bigger. I do not see how anyone can fail to praise the Czech authorities for their handling of an extraordinarily difficult situation.

(ii) LORD RUNCIMAN'S LAST EFFORT

While the *putsch* was going on in the Sudeten country the Henleinists made their final breach with Prague, and Lord Runciman made his last vain effort to get the two sides together again.

As the day after Hitler's speech wore on and the rioting spread in the Sudeten towns the tension in Government offices in Prague increased. An ominous portent was the closing by the Sudeten German Party of their Prague headquarters, and the departure from the capital of almost all members of the party normally resident there. Similarly, Tuesday's issue of the S.d.P. daily, *Die Zeit*, announced that it was appearing for the last time. Other party publications followed suit.

A little before six o'clock a telephone call for Prime Minister Hodža came through from Asch. On the other end of the line was Herr Karl Frank, Henlein's deputy. He

THE HENLEINIST PUTSCH

proceeded to present the Prime Minister with an ultimatum. The Government was given six hours to accept or refuse. What Herr Frank read over the telephone to the Prime Minister was as follows :

The leaders of the Sudeten German Party have established that a large number of Sudeten Germans have been killed or wounded by organizations of the State or by Czech frontiersmen. In this situation the leaders of the Sudeten German Party feel themselves unable to negotiate with the Government freely and without restriction over the rights and destiny of the Sudeten Germans unless the Government adopts the following measures :

1. The proclamation of martial law shall be immediately withdrawn.
2. The State police shall be immediately withdrawn from all districts with a German majority population ; the police control will be handed over to the magistrates and municipal advisers.
3. The *gendarmerie* and all other organizations of the special Government services are to be reduced to their normal numbers and confined to their normal duties.
4. All military formations are to be confined to their barracks, and shall be kept removed from the civilian population.

Should this demand by the Sudeten Germans for the restoration of the normal situation, in which alone can negotiations take place, not be accepted in six hours, and the acceptance and withdrawal of the measures be made known by a broadcast announcement, the leaders of the Sudeten German Party decline all responsibility for all future developments.

It was impossible for the Government to accept dictation like this from rebels. No one in Prague doubted that Dr Hodža would do anything but reject the ultimatum. At midnight the Prime Minister informed Herr Frank that the Government was ready to negotiate over any demands of the S.d.P. with its representatives, but that this really could not be done by telephone. The Government, he said, could not revoke the necessary measures it had taken for public security, but if the S.d.P. representatives would

come to Prague, and if the party would issue a proclamation calling upon its members to obey the laws and keep the peace, then the Government would consider the Henleinists' demands. This offer was rejected by the S.d.P. a quarter of an hour after midnight. That midnight telephone conversation was the last contact between the S.d.P. and the Government.

Earlier in the evening the British mission had made its last attempt at mediation. At 6.30 Mr Ashton-Gwatkin rang up Henlein's office at Asch and asked for an interview with Henlein. Mr Ashton-Gwatkin, Mr Peto, and Mr Ian Henderson, after a five hours' drive from Prague, arrived in Asch at 1 A.M. on Wednesday morning—to be informed by party underlings that Henlein was not there, but that if the English gentlemen cared to go to Eger they would be able to talk to Herr Frank. At half-past two in the morning at Eger arrangements were duly made for an interview with Henlein. It took place at 11.45. Henlein declared that, in his view, the events of the past forty-eight hours showed that conditions no longer existed for a continuation of the negotiations. Accordingly he had relieved the negotiating committee of their duties. Further, said Henlein, the "eight Karlsbad demands" had now been superseded by events; the whole Sudeten problem had entered on a new phase, the essence of which was the demand for self-determination. Henlein thanked the representatives of Lord Runciman's mission for their labours, the aim of which "had been" the settlement of the nationality question.

The Runciman mission was thus politely dismissed. It had outlived its usefulness to Henlein and to Germany, and was now relegated to the past tense. Two days later—on the 16th—Lord Runciman returned to London. He had been superseded as mediator by Mr Chamberlain, who arrived in Berchtesgaden and talked with Hitler on the same day—September 15—that Henlein fled to Germany, and from that safe retreat gallantly called upon his followers to use all means in their power to resist oppression.

THE HENLEINIST PUTSCH

(iii) THE BERCHTESGADEN MEETING

When it first became known in Prague that Mr Chamberlain was to fly to Berchtesgaden to meet Hitler hardly anyone could believe the news. It seemed so extraordinary a thing to do. Moreover, there did not seem any special necessity for such emergency action. The situation was unpromising, certainly, but to the Czechs by no means hopeless. The Henleinist *putsch* had been suppressed ; the country, though anxious, was quiet. The unobtrusive calling up of reservists was going on steadily. Now and then one noticed that this or that acquaintance with whom one wanted to speak was not available—he had gone to join his regiment. This fact of gradual mobilization could not be concealed from the public. But it caused no unusual distress or excitement. The reason was, I think, that the Czech people, in the main, had long made up their minds that a war with Germany would be inevitable some day. On the whole the prospect did not displease them. Their dislike of the Nazi social system reinforced the racial antipathy of Slavs for Germans. The break-up of the Nazi *régime* would certainly have called forth rejoicings among the democratic majority in Czechoslovakia. For that reason the nation was prepared to co-operate enthusiastically with France, Britain, and the U.S.S.R. in a war on Germany. But because the Czech people regarded the prospect of war with equanimity they failed to realize that France and Britain by no means shared their attitude. Mr Chamberlain's effort to stave off war by going to meet Hitler therefore came as a surprise.

Surprise grew into anxiety and suspicion when the Czechs noted that on the very morning of the day Mr Chamberlain was to see the Führer Henlein issued from his refuge in Germany a pronouncement that "we want liberty and work in our Fatherland ; we want to be home in the Reich." Moreover, this assertion was backed up by statements in the German Press, such as that of the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* that

The end of Czechoslovakia in her present form is accepted as a plain matter of course. Konrad Henlein's proclamation,

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

Mussolini's open letter to Runciman, Chamberlain's courageous decision, and Daladier's declared willingness—these are all facts which were bound to arise from the unalterable firmness of the German will.

When the Czechs found the Germans praising Mr Chamberlain they reckoned that the British Prime Minister's action meant nothing good for Czechoslovakia. The Catholic *Lidové Listy* expressed popular feeling when it said :

The pressure exercised upon us by our allies bears a heavy responsibility for the worsening of the situation. The man in the street does not understand why far-reaching concessions and often even bitter humiliations were necessary to difficult negotiations, which, in the end, have only brought us where we are to-day. This wretched result of the pressure policy of our allies presents not only us, but also our allies in the west with the question whether they wish to continue along this path. A continuation of pressure would not only weaken us internationally, but might also ruin us internally. Our allies will do well to realize what a strong Czechoslovakia can mean for them.

The Government was no less uneasy than was the general public about Mr Chamberlain's intentions. Bechyně, the Vice-Premier, referring to rumours that a plebiscite was being discussed at Berchtesgaden, said :

A plebiscite is the shortest way to war, for a Government which would accept a plebiscite does not exist in Czechoslovakia. If, however, such a Government should be found, then it would be swept out of office in an hour by the indignation of the whole nation.

When I called at the Černin Palace to get the Foreign Office opinion on the Berchtesgaden meeting I found officials very reserved. For public consumption the comment was that the Government welcomed direct contact between Mr Chamberlain and Hitler, since this might help to bring about a peaceful solution of the problem. But both the man who made this remark and I knew that the 'welcome' was half-hearted. Privately, my friend X at the Foreign Office was more communicative. He referred to

THE HENLEINIST PUTSCH

Henlein's "home in the Reich" declaration, and said, "That's a nice present for Mr Chamberlain!" For his part, he was afraid that the Berchtesgaden visit was part of a deliberate plan to sacrifice Czechoslovakia to Germany for the sake of saving Britain from war. He could not say such a thing officially, because Prague was still anxious not to displease Britain or France in any way, but such was his own conclusion from the information he had.

What was a mystery to the Czechs—and to some degree it is still a mystery—was the reason which impelled Mr Chamberlain to make his spectacular dash to Germany. Since the Henleinist revolt had been suppressed, and Henlein had revealed his weakness as a leader by abandoning his followers, what was it that at this late stage made the British judge the situation so menacing as to need direct and immediate intervention?

To the House of Commons on September 28 Mr Chamberlain said :

... by the evening of September 14 a highly critical situation had developed, in which there was immediate danger of the German troops, now concentrated upon the frontier, entering Czechoslovakia to prevent further incidents occurring in the Sudetenland and fighting between the Czech forces and the Sudeten Germans, although reliable reports indicated that order had been completely restored in these districts by September 14.

This statement is an unsatisfactory description of the situation on September 14. Mr Chamberlain himself admits that order had been restored by that date. If that was so—as it certainly was—where was the shadow of justification, even from the Nazi point of view, for the entry of Reich German troops? If Mr Chamberlain meant that there was a danger of deliberate, unprovoked, and unjustified invasion of Czechoslovakia, then there were possibly grounds for this fear. I myself do not think that there was such immediate danger on the date in question, as, indeed, subsequent events showed. Anyhow, Mr Chamberlain apparently considered that an immediate outbreak of hostilities was likely. Support for his view came

from Czech sources. I was told by a Czech official a week later that, according to the Prague Government's information, Hitler had planned to order the invasion of Czechoslovakia to begin on the day Mr Chamberlain went to Berchtesgaden. It will be remembered, however, that subsequently three other 'zero hours' were allegedly fixed by Hitler—September 28, September 29, and October 1. There is reason to believe that the story about an immediate invasion on the 15th was deliberately circulated by Germany in order to spur Britain to action. The Henleinist *putsch* having ignominiously failed, Hitler was obliged to try some other device for forcing the pace. The announcement of a date for invasion was one of the most obvious.

Naturally, when Hitler saw Mr Chamberlain he talked so as to sustain the idea of an imminent invasion. But Mr Chamberlain flattered himself somewhat in saying "I have no doubt whatever now, looking back, that my visit alone prevented an invasion, for which everything was ready."

At the most the Prime Minister was entitled to say "prevented an *attempted* invasion." The German troops might have advanced, but the Czechoslovak army was no less ready to repel the invader. For there is no doubt whatever that the Czechoslovaks, given the faintest hope of assistance from Britain and France, would have been ready to endure the misery and devastation of war for the sake of shaking Nazi-ism.

(iv) AN ALTERNATIVE TO HENLEIN

Among the many possibilities leading to a juster settlement for Czechoslovakia which were passed over, or hustled out of the way, by the Great Powers, one of the most promising was the attempt to found a new party for the Sudeten Germans, to take the place of the dissolved S.d.P.

On Sunday, September 18, Prime Minister Hodža aroused widespread interest by a broadcast speech in which he rejected the idea of a plebiscite, and then pointed out that the Government "did not need Henlein."

THE HENLEINIST PUTSCH

I declare [he said] that, despite Henlein's refusal to agree with the Czechoslovak Government on a settlement of the nationality problem, and despite his attempt at revolution, nevertheless the Government has in no way changed its previous policy of understanding with the nationalities—in particular, with the Sudeten Germans. In this it will defend the integrity of the State and conduct negotiations on the basis of the last proposals.

For this the Government does not need Henlein and the other leaders who have fled, because it has before it the masses of the Sudeten German people, the overwhelming majority of whom desire a peaceful settlement of national relationships.

What encouraged Dr Hodža to make this statement were certain developments which had taken place among the Henleinists still left in the country and among other German groups. On Friday and Saturday it looked as though there was a good chance of a new party being formed which would be prepared to resume negotiations. One or two S.d.P. leaders, notably Herr Kundt and Dr Peters, also a member of the negotiating committee, had remained in Prague after Henlein's flight. On the 16th I happened to see Kundt sitting in the lounge of one of the Prague hotels. I made inquiries about what he was doing in Prague, and found that certain preliminary discussions were going on with members of the former German Agrarian and German Clerical Parties, with a view to the formation of a new party, including also a section of the former S.d.P., for the purpose of continuing negotiations with the Government. It became plain that a considerable section of the Henleinists were incensed by their leader's flight, and were prepared to dissociate themselves from the 'extremist' policy of Henlein and Frank.

There was evidence of the change of heart, or, at least, of tactics, brought about by the collapse of the *putsch*, in the actions of various local leaders of the S.d.P. At Asch, for instance, the local party boss, Herr Ritter, made a declaration to the authorities that he welcomed the restoration of law and order, and that he was prepared to give any assistance he could for the maintenance of peace. At Marienbad a similar statement was made by Senator

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

Ludwig Frank. At Neuern the S.d.P. mayor joined with the chairman of the local German Social Democrat Party in issuing a statement calling on the population to keep the peace and to pay no attention to the false rumours spread by hostile propaganda agencies. At Braunau the local S.d.P. deputy visited the office of the public authorities and thanked them for the exemplary way in which the police and the *gendarmérie* had acted. He gave a promise that members of the former S.d.P. would obey the laws of the Republic.

Significant too was a proclamation issued jointly by Wenzel Jaksch, leader of the German Social Democrats, and representatives of the former German Agrarian, Democratic, and Catholic Parties. This proclamation, after declaring that the Fourth Plan provided a suitable basis for fruitful negotiations—"which the S.d.P. also recognized so long as it was still master of its own will"—pointed out that the S.d.P. leaders had, by their flight, eliminated themselves as negotiators with the Government, and said :

It is now the task of the peace-loving Sudeten Germans to provide new partners for the assurance of an agreement between the nationalities. . . . The only way out of the present situation is the voluntary co-ordination of all German parties and groups in one community which shall serve the people and their homeland. All special private and party interests should be subordinated to the creation of a National Council of all peaceable Sudeten Germans.

This proclamation and the attitude of Herr Kundt, together with assurances of loyalty from eleven of the old Bohemian noble families, and a statement from the Dean of the German University in Prague and many other German professors that they rejected Henlein's "home in the Reich" proclamation, gave the Government reason to think that there was a chance of re-establishing relations with the Sudeten Germans through a party which would be loyal to the Constitution. Such a new party, however, never had a chance to develop owing to the speed with which events moved outside Czechoslovakia.

THE HENLEINIST PUTSCH

What, above all, frustrated the creation of a new German party was the frantic effort to please Hitler made by Britain and France in London on Sunday, September 18. On that day the Anglo-French plan for the surrender of Czechoslovakia was drafted. On the evening of that day in Prague Herr Kundt drew back from any proposals for continuing negotiations, and dissociated himself from any new party. He indicated that he was waiting to see the outcome of the deliberations in London. Once the Anglo-French plan became known, as it did on the Monday, it was obvious that the project of a new party for the Sudeten Germans no longer had any purpose.

CHAPTER IX

THE ANGLO-FRENCH SURRENDER

It has been said many times that Britain and France betrayed Czechoslovakia in September 1938. That France did so cannot be denied, since she had given her word and refused to keep it. So far as Britain is concerned, it is arguable that there was no betrayal, because no promise had been given. But, in any case, it is indisputable that the action of both Powers was a surrender—a surrender to the threat of war.

To the people of Czechoslovakia the plan drawn up for the partition of their country was a betrayal beyond all doubt. How could it have seemed otherwise? Did not Czechoslovakia's *ally, and friend*, in fact, side with her worst *enemy*? What could be a greater treachery than that?

In the news bulletin I edited for the Czechoslovak Foreign Office I wrote :

“ Our best friends have betrayed us ! ” That was the comment of every Czechoslovak citizen as soon as the Anglo-French plan for settling the Sudeten-German dispute became known to the public. The question of whether France or Britain is the more directly responsible for the betrayal of Czechoslovakia is of minor importance to the Czechoslovak people. All they see at the present time is that their country has been sold to the enemy—sold by the nations which for twenty years they had regarded as their closest allies and friends. Three days ago when war was believed inevitable the Czechoslovak people were high-spirited, full of courage and determination ; they were an example to the whole world. To-day they are depressed and disheartened. And at the back of their minds lurks the thought that they may even yet have to fight—alone against their enemies—and their ‘ friends.’

The names of Britain and France meet with little respect

THE ANGLO-FRENCH SURRENDER

from the man in the street in Czechoslovakia to-day. It will be Britain especially which will have to bear the blame and the contempt of the Czechoslovak people, because Britain had, in a unique way, assumed responsibility for settling the Czechoslovak problem.

Why, people ask, go through all the long pretence of the Runciman mission, the so-called negotiations with the Sudeten German Party, if this partition of Czechoslovakia is to be the end? So many bitter questions arise. Was this betrayal planned in advance? Was the Runciman mission only a device to drive Czechoslovakia into a corner—into a position in which she was forced to accept partition?

We could deal with Henlein and the S.d.P., the Czechoslovaks say, but how could we defend ourselves against our 'friends'?

On Monday, September 19, the Czechoslovak Government received the Anglo-French plan for surrender to Hitler. It was very simple. It proposed:

1. Districts mainly inhabited by Sudeten Germans must be transferred directly to the Reich.
2. The areas to be transferred were those with over 50 per cent. of German inhabitants.
3. The new boundaries of Czechoslovakia would be internationally guaranteed against unprovoked aggression.

That was all. It meant handing over about a third of Czechoslovakia. It meant the loss of tens of thousands of Czechs, of numbers which a small nation could not easily spare. It meant the loss of a frontier which had existed for nearly a thousand years—one of the clearest natural frontiers in Europe. It meant the loss of fortifications upon which millions of pounds had been spent. It meant the loss of almost all the country's coal-mines, of its chemical industry, of its world-famous spas, of miles of its best forests, of its textile industry. It meant abandonment of democracy and submission to German Fascism. It meant all these things, and more besides, but none the less:

The Prime Minister must resume conversations with Herr Hitler not later than Wednesday, and earlier if possible. We therefore feel we must ask for your reply at the earliest possible moment.

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

The document containing the Anglo-French proposals was handed to President Beneš by Mr B. C. Newton at 2 P.M. on Monday. The Cabinet was in session almost continuously the whole day. Ministers did not go to bed till 1 A.M. on Tuesday. But long before that the public knew enough of the proposed surrender to show its indignation and anger, for the Monday afternoon papers had published brief versions of the Anglo-French plan, such as had appeared in London and Paris. These accounts were not official, and people hoped against hope that they were not true.

On Monday evening I went up to the Hradčany, to see a friend in the Foreign Office. The Hradčany is the Kremlin of Prague ; it is the President's Palace, the Cathedral, the Černin Palace, and other State buildings grouped on a hill that rises steeply from the Vltava river and the winding streets of old Prague. Normally the Hradčany Square is dark and deserted by six o'clock. The massive wrought-iron lamps in the square hold up dim pearls beneath the ancient trees. The high, baroque palaces are mere dark silhouettes against the sky. But to-night the windows of the President's Palace blazed with light. At the Černin Palace, seat of the Foreign Office, the lights shone all along the first floor, and in the entrance lobby half a dozen men stood about, talking, waiting. Behind the brightly lit windows of the Hradčany the fate of the Czechoslovak Republic was being determined.

I found my friend dead tired for want of sleep. The officials were working all round the clock at this time. Outside his room a ticker-tape machine poured yard after yard of the world's news on to the floor. In the corridor the director of one of the Prague banks walked uneasily up and down, waiting for an appointment.

To-night Beneš and the Government were fighting for their country—fighting as much as if they were on the battlefield. Indeed, this was a battle, for Beneš and his Ministers were struggling against the combined forces of Germany, France, and Britain. They were struggling not to give in, desperately searching for some way out. Yet every one, in his heart, could not but feel the fight was hopeless. Never

THE ANGLO-FRENCH SURRENDER

was the saying truer that "He who is not with me, is against me" than in the life-and-death struggle of the Czechoslovak Republic. Britain and France were not with the Republic: they sought to be mediators, peace-makers, and thus they came to be against the Republic.

"We shan't accept the plan!" said my friend at the Černín. "The best solution for us is war!"

"You can't fight alone," I said.

"France will have to fight, and then Britain will come in," he replied. He hoped it, but I knew he did not believe it.

I said, "If you had just Russia as an ally, would you fight?"

"No," he said. "We couldn't. If we did that your country and France would go *with* Germany against us. They would say it was a war to save Europe from Bolshevism."

I raised my eyebrows at that. Was it possible that the change-over could go so far? Yes, my friend insisted, it was possible.

That night I wrote:

In official quarters there is bewilderment and disappointment at the sudden surrender of Britain and France. Here, in essentials, is the point of view of the Czechoslovak Foreign Office:

All our work of the past twenty years is undone. Masaryk, Beneš, all our leading statesmen, placed their confidence in the two Western Powers. We made an alliance with France because the French thought we could be a useful support to them, and we naturally looked for help from our allies of the Great War.

We were not afraid of war with Germany if France and Britain were ready to support us. But we cannot fight Germany alone. And we cannot expect the U.S.S.R. to be our solitary ally, because a war between ourselves and the Soviet Union against Germany would so easily be represented as a German war against Bolshevism. The whole character of the war would be different.

If Britain, France, Czechoslovakia, and Russia had fought Germany now the result would have been the end of the Nazi *régime*. The only explanation of why the Western Powers have suddenly got frightened is that they know this, and they do not want the end of Hitler.

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

Why was Hitler in such a hurry for a settlement of the Sudeten-German question? Why was it so necessary for him that a solution should be reached within the next few weeks? The reason is that he could not face the winter without a success in this question. He had gambled so much on winning in Czechoslovakia that a defeat would have meant danger to his rule. It was impossible to keep 1,500,000 men under arms and the whole nation in a state of extreme tension for much longer.

There may be peace now, but at the best it can only be for a year or two. If Germany considers she has a right to the Sudeten region, then why not the Polish Corridor, and Alsace, and half a dozen other parts of Europe?

Above all, we are disappointed in France. We could have understood if Britain found herself unable to help us. But France was our ally. And now if Germany demands the return of Alsace and France wants our help, what help shall we be able to give?

We are offered guarantees of our independence, but what will that mean in practice? The independence of Austria was guaranteed by the League of Nations, and we have seen what happened to Austria.

Public feeling against Britain and France rose perceptibly that evening. At one well-known Prague restaurant two colleagues of mine were refused admission. Several British and French residents thought it prudent to remove their national flags from their motor-cars. An English journalist was even advised not to smoke his pipe in the street, because thus he would draw attention to his nationality. Certainly it was embarrassing to meet Czech acquaintances at this time.

On Monday night preventative censorship of the Press was introduced. Certain other constitutional liberties and rights were suspended for three months. All public meetings were prohibited; houses could be searched without warrant, and persons suspected of activities dangerous to the State arrested. Letters had to be posted unsealed, and the secrecy of the post was abolished.

In Prague and other big cities housewives stocked up supplies of sugar, flour, tinned goods. People carrying home their gas-masks became a frequent sight in the streets. The atmosphere began to be one of steady preparation for war.

THE ANGLO-FRENCH SURRENDER

Yet the decision which was taken at the Hradčany shortly before 1 A.M. pointed against war : the Government decided to accept the Anglo-French plan in principle, but to request more detailed information before giving a final reply.

(i) THE ULTIMATUM TO PRESIDENT BENEŠ

Tuesday, September 20, was a critical day. Dr Beneš and the Cabinet met at 11 o'clock to formulate the reply to London. Meanwhile the public was getting more and more uneasy. Newspapers had published *The Times* version of the Anglo-French plan, and this gained more credence than appeals not to believe what foreign newspapers reported, or than a would-be comforting statement by Dr Hodža that the Government "would do everything so that the vital interests of the people and the State should suffer no loss." Popular lack of trust in the Hodža Government was already becoming noticeable. Many hoped that the army would turn out the Government. Most people thought the proposed plan could never be accepted and that there would be war in the end.

A Czech friend rang me up and asked whether he should not send his wife and child to safety in the country before the war began. I said, "There will not be a war ; there will be an agreement. It will not be very nice for Czechoslovakia, but it will be made." He half believed me. He sent only the child.

All day Tuesday the Government went on discussing and deliberating. Finally at five in the afternoon a note giving the Czech reply was handed to the British and French Ministers. The note asked Britain and France to reconsider their proposal for ceding the frontier districts to Germany. It pointed out that there was no guarantee that such a settlement would be final ; that the Poles and Hungarians would also demand territory ; that the Republic would lose her defences and be rendered helpless ; that the plan would cause grave internal trouble. Finally it suggested that the dispute was clearly one which could be settled under the Arbitration Treaty between Germany and Czechoslovakia

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

of October 16, 1925, which was still valid. This treaty provided for the submission of disputes which could not be settled amicably by normal diplomatic methods to a conciliation commission consisting of one German, one Czech, and three neutrals.

The British and French Ministers in Prague were, however [narrated Mr Chamberlain, on September 28], instructed to point out to the Czechoslovak Government that there was no hope of a peaceful solution on this basis, and, in the interests of Czechoslovakia and of European peace, the Czechoslovak Government was urged to accept the Anglo-French proposals immediately. This they did immediately and unconditionally on September 21.

So put, the matter could not seem simpler. In fact, however, the Czechoslovak surrender was not so easily obtained. First, let us see what were the instructions sent to the British Minister in Prague. As given by Earl Stanhope to the House of Lords on October 5, the instructions sent to the British Minister read as follows :

You should at once join with your French colleague in pointing out to the Czechoslovak Government that their reply in no way meets the critical situation which the Anglo-French proposals were designed to avert, and if adhered to would, when made public, in your opinion, lead to an immediate German invasion. You should urge the Czechoslovak Government to withdraw this reply and urgently consider an alternative that takes account of realities. The Anglo-French proposals remain, in our view, the only chance of avoiding an immediate German attack. On the basis of the reply now under consideration I would have no hope of any useful result ensuing from a second visit to Herr Hitler, and the Prime Minister would be obliged to cancel the arrangements for it. We therefore beg the Czechoslovak Government to consider urgently and seriously before producing a situation for which we could take no responsibility.

We should, of course, have been willing to put the Czechoslovak proposal for arbitration before the German Government if we had thought that at this stage there was any chance of its receiving favourable consideration, but we cannot for a moment believe that it would be acceptable now. Nor do we think that the German Government would regard

THE ANGLO-FRENCH SURRENDER

the present proposition as one that is capable of being settled by arbitration as the Czechoslovak Government suggest.

If on reconsideration the Czechoslovak Government feel bound to reject our advice they must, of course, be free to take any action they think appropriate to meet the situation that may thereafter develop.

Please act immediately on receipt at whatever hour.

In accordance with that last instruction, Mr Newton and M. de Lacroix, the French Minister, called on Dr Beneš at the President's Palace at 2 A.M. on Wednesday morning. Most of the talking was done by Mr Newton. He and M. de Lacroix remained with the President till 3 A.M.

A diplomatic representative has a certain choice as to the manner in which he carries out his instructions. But if the telegram sent to Prague did, in fact, contain nothing more than what was revealed in the House of Lords, then it must be said that the impression left upon President Beneš was very different from that given by the telegram itself.

A few hours after the interview at the Presidential Palace I heard various details about it from officials of the Foreign Ministry, of the President's office, and from a member of the Diplomatic Corps. After my conversation with the latter I noted :

It seems that the British and French Ministers talked to Beneš as though he were just a governor of Liberia or Haiti. Indignation even among the staff of one of the Legations at the manner in which a brutal ultimatum was presented.

From the Czech side I learned that the sense of the Anglo-French representations to President Beneš was that if Czechoslovakia rejected the Anglo-French plan, then she alone would be guilty of causing the war that would result ; that France would not fulfil her treaty engagements if war broke out, and that Britain likewise would give no assistance ; and, finally, that if Czechoslovakia was thinking of relying on Russian support, then she would no longer be able to reckon with British and French friendship.

In brief, the impression conveyed to President Beneš was that Britain and France, far from being supporters of

Czechoslovakia, were, in fact, on the German side. The British and French Governments did not care a fig for the State they had helped to create. They were certainly not going to fight for it. In language that was far from diplomatic, with much stamping and banging on the table, Dr Beneš was bullied into surrender.

There was, indeed, every justification for Lord Lloyd's subsequent description of the manner and language used in the 2 A.M. interview as "third-degree methods." Neither is it surprising that Lord Lloyd added, "If language anything like that referred to was used I would hang my head in shame."

It will be hard for Dr Beneš ever to forget the way he was treated at that interview. It is a tribute to the self-control of the President and of the Government that the official announcement about the 2 A.M. meeting merely said: "In a way which is without parallel in history our allies and friends dictated to us a sacrifice such as is imposed upon the vanquished."

After Mr Newton and M. de Lacroix had left the President the Cabinet still had to give its consent. Accordingly, the Ministers were summoned by telephone, and from 4 A.M. to 6 A.M. the bitter necessity was once more discussed. The final seal was set on the decision by a meeting of all the Coalition parties' leaders. By midday the tragic news had spread by word of mouth throughout the capital. In the streets big crowds collected outside the newspaper offices; knots of men and women stood about talking. Many thought that the Government was only gaining time and that there would yet be war. There seemed ground for this belief, since it was noted in offices and factories that increasing numbers of men were absent—they had been called up. Moreover, the "C.P.O."—the Czechoslovak equivalent of the British Air Raid Precautions—began to extend its activities. Classes in first aid were swiftly got together; air-raid wardens were appointed in every household; over the entrances of Prague's many underground *cafés* and cinemas appeared large yellow and red notices announcing "Public Refuge."

THE ANGLO-FRENCH SURRENDER

As the day passed the bewildered and angry crowds in the streets grew larger. About five o'clock a Czech journalist looked in at my office, and said: "There's ten thousand in the Wenceslas Square already. There'll be twice as many before it's dark."

I called at the office of the *Prager Presse*, famous newspaper founded by Masaryk, for twenty years an outstanding organ of liberal ideas in Central Europe. "I still can't believe it," one of the editors said to me. "How can Britain and France do such a thing? They can't betray us like this!" Dry, hard-headed journalist though the man was, he was almost in tears. "The Government can't accept it," he went on. "There will be a revolution. The Government will be thrown out."

I went out and walked down to the Wenceslas Square, the wide, tree-lined avenue named after the tenth-century saint who is the patron of the Czechs. The Wenceslas Square is the heart of Prague, and the inevitable setting for political demonstrations.

In the gathering dusk, beneath the blue and red and green of neon signs, beneath the loud-speakers attached to the electric-light standards, about the bronze equestrian statue of St Wenceslas, a string of dense, irregular knots of men and women was slowly thickening, spreading to form one vast sea of people. The trams slowly grated and jolted down the long avenue, for the crowd spilled over from the pavements into the roadway; slowly the motor-cars and taxis worried their way through.

From the plinth of the Wenceslas statue a man addressed the people. They heard him in all but silence. Mostly they just talked to one another, each trying to learn something new from his neighbour, each saying what he thought should be done. Scores stood beneath the loud-speakers, expecting at any moment an announcement.

Public assemblies had been forbidden only two days before, but every one instinctively knew that no attempt would be made to enforce the order on such a day as this, and, in fact, in the whole of the Wenceslas Square not a policeman was to be seen.

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

At last, at 8 o'clock, the suspense was ended. From the loud-speakers came the voice of one of Czechoslovakia's most famous actors—Štěpánek, former Czech Legionary. He read the Government's proclamation. Seldom can an official statement have been so moving as this one was.

Our nation [he said] has in its history been visited by many catastrophes and disasters. Dire storms have passed over our land, leaving the earth desolate and hundreds of thousands of its people to starvation. Often it seemed that our people were uprooted and annihilated. Our history is written with blood ; it brings pain to the heart and tears to the eyes. Yet our people have always risen up again, and after times of subjection came times of growth. Peasants and artisans returned to their work, arts and science flourished, and our people put forth flowers of culture which were the pride of the whole nation. Our people survived the harshest ages of serfdom when it seemed that they could never, never rise again.

To-day such a disaster threatens the nation and the State once more. . . .

In the streets men and women wept as they listened.

God knows there is not an honest man in the world who could say we were afraid, that we were cowards, when we authorized our Foreign Minister to-day to tell Britain and France that we have decided to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of peace, for the welfare of the world, even as centuries ago the greatest of saints sacrificed himself upon the cross for the good of mankind.

Dear brothers and sisters, dear fathers, mothers, and children, we will not reproach those who have abandoned us ! History will pass its judgment on these days. Our duty is to look to the future, to watch, to guard the nation, which must and shall live. . . . We do not go under. We shall keep our land. With heads high we face the future. *Nazdar !*

From the Wenceslas Square a vast throng marched to the Hradčany. The crowd numbered 16,000 when it reached the Castle Square. Here General Jan Syrový, Inspector-General of the Army, hero of the Czech Legion-swiss, addressed the people, called upon them to sing the national Anthem and to disperse. Under night the crowds marched through the streets of red no.

THE ANGLO-FRENCH SURRENDER

Prague, carrying the white, blue, and red flag of the Republic. There was no violence, no stone-throwing or fighting, no attacks on foreign Legations or shops. There was only the dogged, dour multitude, moving with the heavy persistence of a tide. Now and then some one shouted, "We are not Austria!" or "We're not afraid of the Germans!" Or the marchers would stop and sing the National Anthem, and a policeman would pause on his beat and salute. Then the quiet, slow movement of people began again.

(ii) THE FALL OF THE HODŽA GOVERNMENT

By Thursday morning it was clear that popular indignation was so great that the Hodža Government could not remain in office. The people knew that it was not to blame for the humiliation which had been forced upon Czechoslovakia. None the less, a sacrifice was demanded. It had to go. At seven in the morning the people were already again crowding the streets. The workers in the Prague factories had been called out on strike. Nationalists, Socialists, Communists—every party had its legions on the streets that cold, sunny morning. They carried the flag of the Republic, Communists and all, and every bystander saluted as it passed. Some of the marchers bore banners with lines from the stirring fifteenth-century Hussite hymn, *Warriors of God, Arise!* The banners challenged despair:

*Fear not your enemies,
Count not their numbers!*

Upon the plinth of the Wenceslas statue a group of working-women unfolded a banner saying: "We women want to save our families from Fascism!"

The keen, crisp air brought exhilaration to the throng. Men shouted up to the faces in office windows, "Don't work to-day; come and join us!" In a better humour, and more aggressive than the night before, the workers shouted bitter slogans against the surrender made by the Government of Dr Hodža, the Agrarian Prime Minister. "Down with

the Agrarian capitulators ! ” they cried. “ We want a military dictatorship ! Soldiers in the Government ! Long live the Czechoslovak army ! ”

Some one had made up a rhyming couplet, jeering at Hitler :

We won't give the Republic
To the German decorator !

*(My nedáme republiku
německému zalmouniku !)*

It was chanted with glee.

At eleven the early editions of the evening papers came out, black-edged, patched with white where the censor had been at work, but all announcing that the Government had fallen.

Round the loud-speakers in the Wenceslas Square stood dense, expectant crowds. They listened to Dr Dérér, until that morning Minister of Justice, making his last speech to the public with all the emotionalism of which a Slovak is capable. They listened to Dr Zenkl, energetic, capable Lord Mayor of Prague, who mobilized the uniformed Sokol gymnastic association to keep order, and to General Jan Syrový, now more than ever a national hero.

At 1.30 P.M. General Syrový broadcast an appeal for order. He spoke tersely, with the dry firmness of a soldier :

Citizens ! In this fateful hour for the nation and the State I demand of all of you that you remain at your posts—the soldier with his gun, the farmer at his plough, the worker in the factory, the official in his office. The army watches over the security of the Republic. It cannot fulfil its tasks if the nation does not stand calmly and unitedly behind it. Show your mettle by your work for the State. Let every one return at once to his duty. Only so can we be ready to defend the State. Any further demonstration will work for the enemy !

That was all, but it was sufficient, so great was popular trust in the stout, one-eyed General. The crowds cheered and clapped when he had spoken.

General Syrový became Prime Minister later in the day, with a Cabinet consisting chiefly of officials.

The outgoing Premier, Dr Hodža, had been in office since 1935. The general opinion about his Ministry was well summed up by the *Prager Tagblatt*, which said: "All in all, the Hodža Cabinet had the best intentions, and made beginnings towards carrying them out, but then came to a stop."

Dr Milan Hodža was a brilliant orator, who could make an impressive speech, in the manner of the old Hungarian Parliament, with the briefest of preparation. A Slovak by race, he was a fluent master of Hungarian, German, English, and French. He could expound complicated financial and economic matters with ease, but his colleagues found it hard to extract decisions from him. His greatest failing was his habit of making proposals and promises, and then entirely neglecting to follow them up or carry them out. Some of the responsibility for the German-Czech tangle must undoubtedly rest with Dr Hodža.

The appointment of General Syrový as Prime Minister created perturbation in certain diplomatic circles in Prague, which regarded the portly General as an incipient Communist—despite the fact that he had fought *against* the Bolsheviks in 1918—and which were afraid that he would immediately repudiate the surrender to the Anglo-French plan made by the previous Government. To anyone who had the slightest knowledge of General Syrový nothing could seem more ridiculous than this fear. I had had a talk with the General—he speaks excellent French—at a British Legation reception in July, and it seemed to me that he cared absolutely nothing about politics, that he was first and foremost a soldier, and left policy to Dr Beneš, whom he admired and trusted. If the President, as Supreme Commander of Czechoslovakia's armed forces, had ordered Syrový to attack Germany he would have done so. If the President ordered him to retreat he did that too, albeit doubtless with less satisfaction to himself. The great value of Syrový to his country in a time of crisis was that he had become during his lifetime an historic figure, for it was under his command that the Czech Legionaries made their famous march through the whole length of Siberia to Vladivostock, in order to

return to Europe *via* America. Thick-set, nearly bald, with a black patch over the right eye-socket, and a row of medals on his uniform, General Syrový was a conspicuous figure in any gathering. But, despite his celebrity, he remained a typical Czech who was felt by the people to be a man of the people. The masses believed him to be brave and honest and clear of any kind of political racketeering. For that reason the people trusted him. His authority was described to me by a Czech politician thus: "If Hodža or some other Minister, or even Beneš, says we must give in many people don't believe it. But if Syrový says so, well, then it must be so!"

After General Syrový's brief radio appeal there were no more demonstrations. A visitor arriving in Prague in the afternoon would not have noticed much out of the ordinary. This fact, however, did not prevent the Nazi wireless putting out a stream of propaganda about Germans in Prague being murderously set upon, and blood flowing in the Wenceslas Square, and soldiers mutinying—all of which stories were lies from beginning to end.

The most noticeable development was the intensification of military preparations. Lorry-loads of troops clattering through Prague to the cheering of passers-by became a more frequent occurrence. The Government was anxiously awaiting the result of the Godesberg meeting, but it was not taking any chances in case of a failure. I had the impression, in fact, that certain official quarters cherished some hope for a breakdown of the Godesberg negotiations, and were fully prepared to take the consequences if these came in the shape of a general European war. It became clear that the acceptance of the Anglo-French plan had not been carried through without bitter argument in the Cabinet and among the various party leaders. The Agrarians, representative of heavy industry, the banks and the agricultural monopolies, were all along strongly in favour of yielding. Some even reckoned they would profit from closer relations with Germany, through a steady stream of big orders for agricultural surpluses, and for the products of the iron and steel industries needed for German rearmament. The

Social Democrats, and the liberally minded Clerical Party, however, were far less enthusiastic. Their supporters combined intense Czech patriotism with equally strong democratic loathing for Nazi-ism. At the same time, these parties naturally did not feel justified in definitely rejecting the decision of the President and Prime Minister to give in, and in thus thrusting upon Czechoslovakia the sole responsibility for war in the way Britain and France had threatened. But if Czechoslovakia's conciliatoriness and Mr Chamberlain's efforts at Godesberg failed to keep the peace, and it could justly be said that Germany had provoked the war, then a large section, probably the majority of the Czechoslovak Cabinet and of the political parties, would have had no regrets.

On Wednesday and Thursday, while Mr Chamberlain was on his way to Godesberg, the Poles and Hungarians presented their demands to Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak Government knew, however, how to estimate the jackal-like policy of these two states. Hungary was poorly armed and incapable of doing more than to create a nuisance on the Slovak frontier. Poland, under the guidance of the cynical Colonel Beck, had no other desire than to be on the winning side. Some weeks previously he had made the Polish attitude perfectly plain to the Czechs. Polish intentions with regard to Czechoslovakia were simple and symmetrical. They were :

1. If Czechoslovakia fought Germany alone Poland would march with Germany.
2. If France stood by the Czechs Poland would remain neutral.
3. If Britain as well as France supported Czechoslovakia Poland would attack Germany.

If, therefore, the Godesberg negotiations failed and Britain and France found themselves forced into a war Czechoslovakia knew well that the Polish and Hungarian demands could safely be rejected, or postponed for later consideration. Of some importance too was the fact that the U.S.S.R. had stated that her pact with Czechoslovakia still held good, despite the acceptance of the Anglo-French

proposals, should France even at this late stage be obliged to assist Czechoslovakia.

It was doubtless thoughts about the possible consequences of a failure of the Godesberg talks which were at the back of President Beneš's mind when he spoke on the radio at 7.5 P.M. on Thursday night, and intrigued all his listeners by saying that he had "a plan for all circumstances." He said :

As a result of the situation which is well enough known to all of us we must at this moment give in. We shall see what will come later.

I am watching developments steadfastly and fearlessly. I have already said that I was never afraid in my life, and to-day too I do not fear for our State. I have my plan for all circumstances, and I shall not let myself be misled. We desire an agreement—which is being worked at to-day—an agreement, if it comes about, between the greatest nations of the world. And if this agreement is an honourable one it will be of great advantage for our people, and will include also a general reconciliation of Britain and France with Germany, our reconciliation with Germany and other neighbours, and our collaboration with the remaining states, particularly in Eastern Europe. Let us therefore wait calmly. . . . Our people have always understood that it is often necessary to negotiate, and often to fight. If we must fight, then we shall do so to our last breath. If it is necessary and possible to negotiate, then we shall negotiate. . . . I repeat that I see the matter clearly, and that I have my plan.

It was generally believed in Prague that an important element in the President's plan was an offer to Poland to restore the Teschen territory, which the Poles had always claimed. If the whole crisis had finally ended in war no doubt this offer would have played a part in turning Poland against Germany.

There was a further hint that all might not be going well at Godesberg in the attitude of the British Legation on Thursday afternoon. By chance I learned that a special aeroplane had been sent for, and that all the wives of the Legation and Consulate staff and the women employed there had been ordered to pack their bags and be prepared to leave that evening. Unless there was a strong likelihood

THE ANGLO-FRENCH SURRENDER

of war it was plain that such action would not have been taken. One could only deduce that the Minister had received disturbing reports from London. The aspect of the Legation building when I called there about six o'clock seemed to confirm this declaration. There was every sign of preparations for an imminent departure. The courtyard was full of motor-cars laden with luggage waiting to be taken to the aerodrome. In the Consulate office harassed clerks were giving one or two British residents of Prague urgent advice to leave the country immediately. A young man, a reserve Air Force pilot, was inquiring whether he would be able to get back to England in time. "I don't relish internment in Germany!" he said. After some hours' waiting it was learned that the special 'plane had not yet arrived, and that it would be too late for it to start that night. It would leave, however, the next morning, and the instructions to the women still held good.

CHAPTER X

CZECHOSLOVAKIA PREPARES FOR WAR

OVER five centuries ago Jan Žižka of the Chalice, the Hussite leader, called up the men of Bohemia for war, saying :

I beg you . . . manfully stand up against the wrongs which you suffer from these Germans, taking as your example the old Czechs, who, valiantly using their lances, fought not only the battle of God, but also their own fight. . . . And therefore, dear brethren, I make known to you that we are gathering the people together from all sides against the foes and destroyers of Bohemia. . . . Remember our first fight when we, the small against the great, the few against the many, the unarmed against the armed, fought valiantly. . . .

That was the Czech mobilization order of September 11, 1422. In the same spirit were the Czechs of 1938 ready to go to war against an enemy many times their size and strength. In the same spirit as that of the Hussite leader did the Czechs of to-day declare that their fight was also the fight of human freedom, of true democracy.

"I beg you . . . manfully stand up against the wrongs which you suffer from these Germans . . ." Five hundred years had passed since those words were said, but the struggle was still on, and the call of that September day in 1422 was no less valid for September 23, 1938. Jan Žižka would have approved the spirit of the Czech people last autumn when once more they gathered together from all sides against the foes and destroyers of Bohemia.

As had become usual for some days past, the clatter of cavalry and the deep rumble of heavy motor traffic wakened the people of Prague early on September 23. The city was anxious, waiting. The atmosphere of tension crackled into sudden alarm when, shortly after breakfast, a 'plane roared low down over the roofs trailing a cloud of leaflets behind it. People rushed to the windows to look ; in the streets faces

jerked skyward. "One of ours, or . . . ?" was the immediate unspoken question. There came a scurry to gather the leaflets—then a smile of amusement when they were read. This was General Syrový's way of issuing an appeal for discipline. "That's the way!" people said, with approval.

There was nothing to be done in Prague just then, for every one was waiting for news from Godesberg. That morning the possibility of a breakdown in the Godesberg talks seemed to be turning into a probability when it was learned that Hitler and Mr Chamberlain were exchanging letters instead of meeting personally. No one yet had any idea of what Hitler had said the previous evening, but the omens were definitely disturbing. At midday the special 'plane ordered by the British Legation left, carrying with it also Mr Stopford, last remaining member of the Runciman mission. The spectacle of troops, provision carts, even armoured cars and artillery passing through the streets of the capital on their way to the frontiers, became commonplace.

I had lunch with X, of the Foreign Office. He was in an unexpectedly cheerful mood. "There may yet be war," he said. "I think it is the best solution for us." I said I did not believe there would be, but he persisted.

He told me that that morning the Czech troops and police had retaken possession of Asch, Eger, Aussig, and some other towns out in the Sudeten country which they had, in obedience to orders, yielded up to the S.d.P. and to the Sudeten German "Free Corps" from over the frontier on the previous day. The swastika flags had disappeared again, and the F.S. men and the "Free Corps"—actually Reich German S.S.—had vanished from sight.

By the late afternoon there was still nothing definite from Godesberg. I rang a friend at one of the Legations in case he should have heard anything.

"You'd better come and see me," he replied. His voice sounded tired and worried. I needed no further hint that something big was in the air.

As soon as I got there he said, "Well, you may as well know. Things look very serious. In fact, we expect Czechoslovakia to mobilize to-night."

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

While we were still talking, at 6.15 P.M., the British and French Ministers informed President Beneš that they had been instructed to say that Britain and France could no longer take the responsibility of advising the Czechoslovak Government to remain passive, and that they withdrew their advice to the Czechs not to mobilize.

The communication was guardedly worded, but it was enough for Dr Beneš. He did not actually know what was happening at Godesberg, but this change of attitude by Britain and France signified plainly that the Hitler-Chamberlain meeting had gone badly, and that there was at least the risk of total failure—and war.

President Beneš immediately summoned General Syrový and his Ministers, the members of the previous Government and the party leaders, and at eight o'clock it was decided to mobilize. At 10.20 P.M. the Czechoslovak people had their expectations of the past days confirmed when every radio station in the country announced :

“In accordance with paragraph 23 of the Defence Act the President of the Republic has ordered the mobilization of the Czechoslovak armed forces.”

The order was broadcast in all the languages of the Republic—Czech, Slovak, Ruthenian, German, Hungarian, and Polish. It was to be obeyed within six hours by all men of military age up to forty. It ran thus :

Citizens ! the most decisive, most serious hour has arrived. Success depends upon every one of you. Understand clearly that your defence, the defence of your families, of your homeland and its freedom, will be best assured if each one selflessly gives his powers and his property for the defence of the State, if each one does correctly and at the right time everything that the State is forced in this difficult moment to ask of all.

Remain steadfast in your duty !

Remain calm, determined, loyal, and reliable. Suffer no mischief-makers among you, and encourage the weak. Our fight is a just fight ! For the freedom of our homeland, one united front of all !

Long live free Czechoslovakia !

Then followed detailed instructions as to what the soldiers were to take with them, and how to get to their posts. All

CZECHOSLOVAKIA PREPARES FOR WAR

horses, motor-cars, aeroplanes, and boats were requisitioned for military purposes. All civil flying was forbidden. At 10.29 all telephone-calls and telegrams for abroad were stopped. From that moment Czechoslovakia was cut off from the world, like a besieged city.

In the Wenceslas Square that evening the usual crowd was promenading leisurely up and down. When the loud-speakers in the square began to speak every one came to a standstill. But for the obstinate jerking of the neon signs there was hardly a movement in the whole wide avenue. In silence the people listened. When the loud-speakers had finished still no one moved for a minute. Then suddenly the street came to life again. A faint murmur, a cry like a muffled cheer, passed through the crowd. So, it had come ! They had expected this, and now—it was there ! The doors of the brightly lit *cafés* and restaurants swung open. Crowds came pouring out. They mingled with the throng of pedestrians. Every one was talking at once. Among all those hundreds and thousands of men and women there was a sudden explosion of relief. At last the uncertainty was over. The tension, the taut wire of worry, of anxiety about what would happen, was snapped. Now they knew what they had to do. And they were ready to do it.

Into the tram-cars surged the dense crowds. Taxis were snapped up. Private cars moved away from their parking places. The order had come : without delay it was obeyed.

From nowhere, it seemed, appeared a column of young men with flags. They went marching up the street, singing, a queer, struggling jubilation in their faces. They passed on, round the corner, to the Wilson Station. Few stopped to watch, or even to cheer. Still the Wenceslas Square continued to empty. The throng of men and women drained out of it, like a river from its bed.

Even the police vanished from the streets. In their place appeared civilians with C.P.O. armlets, who controlled the traffic and ordered motor-car drivers to take soldiers to their railway stations, their barracks, wherever they had to go.

Outside the barracks in the Republic Square there

collected a huge crowd of men with their wives, sisters, or sweethearts. Many of the women were carrying the men's small luggage. But I saw none of the weeping that is supposed to be the women's part on such occasions. They just stood about talking.

Within a quarter of an hour of the mobilization order the first reservists had reported for duty. Among them were waiters from the Prague restaurants, still in their boiled shirts and black ties. All night and into the early hours of the morning the men of Czechoslovakia—including many of the Sudeten Germans—hastened to the defence of the Republic. Even Bulgarians, Yugoslavs, and other foreigners, including many political refugees, offered their services.

A second broadcast, only half an hour after the mobilization order, greatly encouraged the population. The broadcast referred to M. Daladier's statement of that same evening: "France has gone to the extreme limit of her concessions. . . . If Germany makes an attack on Czechoslovakia France will fulfil her commitments." Great though the disillusionment over France had been, the Czechs still hoped that France would not fail now.

The radio announcement said :

Along the whole frontier stands the Czechoslovak army. . . . We are not alone. In the last two days the international situation has changed so decisively and surprisingly that to-day our nation and our state enters upon a struggle forced upon us by the aggressor. Our cause will triumph, for it is the cause of those nations who defend peace. We are not alone. . . . The English Prime Minister Chamberlain returns prematurely to London. His negotiations with Reich Chancellor Hitler have led to no result. In England both the Opposition parties and the Government Conservative Party do not conceal the fact that Great Britain cannot make further concessions to the Third Reich. . . . It is clear that to-day and to-morrow our friends and others will make common cause with us in the struggle, if this should become necessary.

In their houses the people of Prague were pasting black paper over their windows, were getting gas-masks in readiness, were arranging that one person in each block

CZECHOSLOVAKIA PREPARES FOR WAR

of flats should sit up each night to see that no lights were showing, and to give an alarm.

Shortly after midnight the radio announced : " People of Prague ! Darken your windows ! " Until that moment the streets had been brightly lit as usual, but immediately upon the command darkness was slapped down over the city. Every light went out. Prague, with its million inhabitants, seemed to have vanished. Nothing was to be seen but blackness and the stars. From the window of my flat I noticed that even the twin red lights on the masts of the wireless station were absent from the skyline. Below me army supply wagons, dim shapes in the darkness, creaked slowly along the road. Occasionally the house trembled as half a dozen heavy guns rumbled past.

Few slept in Prague that night. At any moment, it was expected, the German bombers would be over the city.

Prague, waiting for war, gave a good indication of what life must be like in a modern city under such conditions.

The day after the mobilization I woke early to see men hurriedly hacking out air-raid trenches in a vacant field opposite my flat. Others were whitewashing kerbstones, planting blue-glass lanterns at corners, on traffic islands. At night the city was completely blacked out. It was forbidden even to light a cigarette in the streets. Death caused by negligence during a black-out could involve the death-penalty for the careless one.

Rapidly Prague was organized for war. The Government proclaimed a state of " defence preparedness," under which anyone could be conscripted for services of one kind or another. Arrangements were made to evacuate women, children, and all dispensable persons from the capital, and to move the Government to Slovakia, if necessary. Motor-cars stood ready day and night outside the Ministries.

As a result of the mobilization, there was a sudden shortage of labour. The army issued an appeal for car drivers. The municipality of Prague wanted a thousand workers. Women took the place of men as tram conductors. Schoolboys and old men controlled the traffic. Taxis vanished entirely from

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

the streets. Theatres were closed, and football matches and other sporting events cancelled.

News bulletins and instructions to the public were broadcast at frequent intervals. There were urgent warnings against spies and *agents provocateurs*. Every one supposed a long war was expected when the Government announced that there was enough food in the country to last till the end of 1939.

Even the Churches were involved in the general concentration of effort. Lay preachers were authorized to marry engaged couples if the man had been called up for active service. Congregations were asked to pray for "the preservation of the State from harm" even if no priest was available.

On St Wenceslas Day, September 28, special church services were held for the patron saint of the Czechs. At St Vitus's Cathedral, in the Hradčany, the skull of St Wenceslas, his golden crown, and his sword and armour were brought out from the treasure chests and displayed to thousands of worshippers. The statue of the saint in the Wenceslas Square became a place of pilgrimage. The plinth was piled high with wreaths and bunches of flowers. All day long crowds stood in silent contemplation round the image of their king of a thousand years ago.

So far as military preparations were concerned, it was difficult to find out what was being done. General Ludwig Krejčí, only forty-eight years old, but a brilliant soldier, a student of the French High School of War, was appointed Commander-in-Chief. The mobilization, it was learned, had been carried out better even than the officers had expected. There were a few attempts at sabotage, but these were of an insignificant character. Preparations which had been made for dealing with *saboteurs* were found unnecessary. Altogether nearly 1,500,000 men were under arms. The mobilization cost about £3,500,000.¹

¹ An official statement broadcast on October 27 said that foreign reports had grossly exaggerated the cost of the mobilization, which, so far as could be computed on that date, had not exceeded 500,000,000 Czechoslovak crowns—i.e., about £3,500,000. The same statement said that the frontier defences of the Republic had cost not quite 2,000,000,000 crowns—i.e., approximately £14,000,000.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA PREPARES FOR WAR

In readiness for the arrival of Soviet troops quantities of rolling-stock were hurried down to the Rumanian frontier. The railway and one main road running through Rumania into Russia were the only routes along which the U.S.S.R. could send reinforcements.

The extent of the military preparations and the care with which they were carried out even in places remote from the capital were made plain to me when I left Prague for the Hungarian frontier.

The German and Polish frontiers had been closed a little before or immediately after the Czechoslovak mobilization. That with Hungary had been also, though this was not known to the British Legation in Prague when I left.

Towards midday on September 24 a telephone message from the Legation stated that all British subjects should leave the country at once, before it became impossible to do so. I was advised to make for Hungary. If there was difficulty there it would still be possible to go on farther eastwards to Rumania, which remained Czechoslovakia's only certain doorway into the world. Some British people who had attempted to enter Germany the night before had been turned back ; the last train into Poland had left early that morning.

A colleague had his motor-car ready. It was true that the petrol in the tank would not be enough to take us to the Hungarian frontier, and it was doubtful whether we would be able to get any on the road, since all supplies had, in principle, been reserved for the army. There was, however, nothing to be done but to start out and hope for the best.

I packed one small suitcase, and left my flat in Prague with the feeling that I would most likely never see it again. At this stage it seemed impossible that there would not now be war across Europe—war which might last for years. As for what would happen to me, when I should ever see England again, it seemed that all this was merely one large question-mark.

The streets of Prague were silent and almost deserted as we drove out of the city in the early afternoon. Hardly a

motor-car was to be seen. Occasionally trams passed, so crowded that people stood outside, on the step, clinging on precariously. Pedestrians all carried, slung over their shoulders, the grey metal canisters that contained gas-masks. Every petrol pump was closed and padlocked.

By dusk we were at Velké Meziříčí, in Moravia, a village of no special importance. But all lights in the main street were out. At the restaurant where we stopped for a bite all blinds were drawn and the lights were turned down to a dull glow. From here to Brno, the Moravian capital, the road was patrolled by sentries, who every few miles or so held up the car to inspect its number-plate. Headlamps had to be kept dimmed, and progress in the darkness over an unknown road was slow and wearisome. As we came nearer to Brno the number of sentries increased. At one place we were ordered to remain stationary, all lights out, while a ghostly train of creaking and jingling provision carts went by, moving westward to the threatened frontiers. Now and then lorry-loads of troops crawled past, only a dim radiance escaping from the blue-papered lamps. We saw many batches of reservists, marching with small bags and bundles of personal belongings to the nearest barracks.

In Brno itself most streets were in darkness, almost deserted, with an occasional blue-lit tram-car creeping along. Here and there, surprisingly, a whole row of lamps still blazed. Brno is only some twenty-five miles from the Austrian border, and it was fully expected that the German plan of campaign would include an attempt to cut through in a north-south direction across the 'waist' of Czechoslovakia, along a line which would inevitably include Brno. It was not surprising, therefore, that we found the town tense and anxious. At the hotel we tried to telephone to Prague, but found that even internal trunk calls had now been stopped. About 11 P.M. all electric current was cut off at the power station. Chambermaids lit us to our rooms with pocket-torches.

The vital question in the morning was that of petrol. Little remained in the tank. If we could not get more we might be stuck indefinitely in Brno. After some inquiry

one petrol station was found open. But we could not have much, we were told—not more than fifteen litres.

The road eastward from Brno leads to Slavkov—better known perhaps to past and present generations as Austerlitz. The place's chances of again becoming a battlefield looked good that morning. Uherský Brod, almost on the boundary of Slovakia, was having its market day, and did not seem unduly perturbed. But all along the road were the same symptoms of imminent war. Continually we passed batches of marching troops, or men in civilians about to get their uniforms and weapons. And not only men were being mobilized: string after string of the fine horses from the Slovak pastures went by. In a field just outside Nitra we watched the peasants handing their horses over to the military and getting chits in return. This town, famous centre of Catholic Slovak tradition, and possible seat of the Government should it leave Prague, was given over entirely to troops. They filled the streets. It seemed they had eaten up all the food. In the taverns we could get nothing to eat. We lunched on a pint of beer.

From now on the road became rough, in most places devoid of surface, here and there simply strewn with unco-ordinated flints. At last we reached Komárno, where, at that time, Czechoslovakia faced Hungary across the Danube. (Now the town, an important river-port, is in Hungary, and has resumed its Magyar name of Komárom.) Here, however, it seemed that the journey from Prague had been in vain. The frontier was closed—closed, moreover, with barbed-wire and anti-tank guns.

At the bridge-head the sentry turned us back. He had orders to let no one across. We were taken to the police headquarters. They had no authority to let us pass. The town was under martial law. We asked then to be taken to the military command. Here we were introduced to a Czech officer, for whose courtesy and efficiency I shall always be grateful. With a smile, despite the earnestness of the hour, he examined our papers, and then accompanied us back to the bridge. "Certain installations," he said, would have to be moved before we could cross. He meant

the barbed wire, the guns, and doubtless the detonators which would blow the bridge sky-high if necessary.

We waited fifteen minutes while the officer gave orders to the soldiers on duty, and the "certain installations" were removed. Then we drove over the bridge into Hungary.

(i) CENTRAL EUROPE BETWEEN PEACE AND WAR

Between September 24 and September 30 I travelled for 1500 miles through Central Europe, from Czechoslovakia into Hungary, Yugoslavia, Italy, across frontiers where might at any moment, it seemed, be heard the crackle of machine-guns and the roar and rattle of motorized armies.

The peasants and workers of Central Europe were even more uninformed about what was happening than were the masses in Britain and France. In so far as they had any feelings about the threatening war, few wanted to take sides either for or against Germany.

Hungary.—The country most immediately affected by the Czechoslovak mobilization was Hungary. The customs officers on the Hungarian side of the Danube, surprised at the arrival of my colleague and myself from over the closed frontier, declared that the Hungarians were not mobilizing. "We're not afraid," one said, with an oily grin. "We haven't s—— our pants!" Nevertheless, on the road to Budapest were the same signs of expected war as in Czechoslovakia—lorries chugging past with loads of army blankets, uniforms, field-kitchens, and groups of sun-browned country lads tramping to the enrolment stations.

Budapest, the smart capital set in a vast plain of poverty, was nervous and excited. In the morning air-raid sirens moaned, and by order all pedestrians disappeared from the streets and traffic came to a standstill. An aeroplane zoomed low down over the city and flung out thousands of pink and blue leaflets that twisted and floated like iridescent confetti in the sunshine, trickling slowly down

CZECHOSLOVAKIA PREPARES FOR WAR

through the air to the streets and the grey waters of the Danube. In the evening there were sirens again, and all lights were out for two or three hours.

I called at the Czechoslovak Legation and asked the Minister his view of what the Hungarians would do. For the moment, he thought, nothing. But their attitude was far from friendly. He, the Minister, could only telephone to Prague with the permission of the Hungarian Foreign Office, and a member of the F.O. staff had to listen in.

The Hungarian Government that day denied that there had been any mobilization, but admitted that "precautionary measures" had been taken. In fact, four classes had been called up. But there was no enthusiasm for war. The air-raid exercises had been a little too realistic for the Budapest population.

In the semi-darkness of dimmed lights guests in the big hotels listened to the broadcast of Hitler's speech from the Berlin Sportpalast—the speech in which he made the whole issue into a personal conflict between himself and Dr Beneš. Doubtless the speech was also heard in many Hungarian homes. The widespread knowledge of German among the middle and upper classes makes it easy for Nazi ideas to penetrate. Further encouragement to National-Socialism, with its promise of land-reform, is given by the crass, side-by-side contrast of riches and poverty—a striking example of which is provided by the fine motor-road which stretches from Budapest to the southern end of Lake Balaton. Up and down the road flash the motor-cars of Budapest society on their way to and from the lakeside hotels and villas. But step off the road, and immediately there is nothing but the vast khaki-coloured plains, the home of almost imbecile-looking, poverty-stricken land-labourers, cattle-drovers, and peasants. Among these people Nazi-ism has naturally made headway. Yokels gave our motor-car a stiff Nazi salute as we passed. At an inn where we ate *gulyás* the serving-woman, who had but two or three words of German, said, rather ridiculously, "Beneš—bah! *Heil Hitler!*"

Yet, despite the hold which Nazi propaganda has in

Hungary, few wanted to fight for Germany. As for regaining the Magyar parts of Slovakia and Ruthenia—that too hardly seemed worth a war. At a garage the mechanic said, “This is the finest September for years—and now there will be war. It’s idiocy for us !”

The Czechoslovak people knew well for what they would fight. They wanted to fight because submission to Germany meant not only the loss of territories ; it meant also the loss of their democratic system, of their political liberty. The matter was otherwise in Hungary : there was little liberty to lose, and who could expect the Hungarian peasant lads to care whether a town was called Komárno or Komárom ?

Yugoslavia.—According to the Little Entente Statute, if Hungary had attacked Czechoslovakia in 1938 Yugoslavia should have come to the assistance of the Czechs. It is very doubtful, however, whether she would, in fact, have done so. In Zagreb I was able to meet one of the British newspaper correspondents stationed in Belgrade and to get an idea of the situation. Many of the Yugoslav people, he said, were in favour of active military support for the Czechs. Numbers of Yugoslavs had called at the Czechoslovak Legation and offered their services ; leaflets saying, “Defend Czechoslovakia !” had been distributed ; the Yugoslav Sokols—thousands of whom had visited Prague for the festival in July—sent a resolution to the Prime Minister stating that their organization was ready at all times to join forces with the Czechs in defending their just cause. But these sentiments were not shared by the Government, which, obsessed by the fear of Communism, preferred to coquette with Fascism and National-Socialism. To prevent too obvious public demonstrations of sympathy for the Czechs all public meetings and processions were forbidden.

On September 24 the military commanders of the various districts had been summoned to Belgrade for conference. In Yugoslav military circles, apparently, it was widely thought that Hitler wished at all costs to avoid a general mobilization because he did not feel sure of the loyalty to

CZECHOSLOVAKIA PREPARES FOR WAR

the Nazi *régime* of the bulk of the German people. Men with guns in their hands, it was being said in Yugoslavia, talk differently from men without arms.

It appeared that, apart from the calling up of a few special troops, no particular military measures had been taken in Yugoslavia. When the Hungarian Minister in Belgrade asked what the Yugoslavs would do in the event of a Hungarian-Czechoslovak conflict he got no definite answer. The chances were, however, that Yugoslavia would do nothing. Since the *Anschluss* Yugoslavia had had common frontiers with both Germany and Italy. That fact alone was almost enough to immobilize Yugoslavia. In addition, she had in her rear Albania, an Italian outpost, and Bulgaria and Greece, both strongly under German and Italian influence.

Certainly there was no sign of military preparations along the Hungarian-Yugoslav frontier where I crossed it, to the south of Nagykanizsa, nor in Varaždin, the first town of any size on the Yugoslav side. The condition of the roads in these remote parts of Central Europe would, in any case, make the transport of troops or material an exceedingly slow business. The fine road from Budapest ceases at the southern end of Lake Balaton, and gives place to a track ribbed and pot-holed, that smokes with thick white dust for half a mile after every passing car. In Yugoslavia the road becomes even worse.

Similarly, on the Yugoslav-Italian frontier there was not the slightest sign of any situation out of the ordinary. We drove from Zagreb, through Ljubljana to the frontier station at Postumia. In this north-western part of Yugoslavia not merely were the roads unsurfaced, but they were exceedingly narrow and wound about among the fields and hills in fantastic convolutions. On the frontier there was so little expectation of any trouble that we had to search around for an official to stamp our passports.

In striking contrast to the Yugoslav roads was the highway which descends from Postumia to Trieste. Wide, with concrete or tarmac surface, banked at the turns, it would enable Italian troops to be rushed to the frontier in thousands

within a few hours. Italy, with only one hostile frontier in her rear, could make short work of a second-class Power which has to keep watch on five boundaries.

Italy.—Was Italy prepared for military action in September 1938? And if so, to what extent? These are difficult questions to answer categorically. In Northern Italy, at least, there was no visible sign of preparation. I travelled from Postumia, *via* Trieste, Vicenza, Verona, Brescia, and Bergamo, to the Swiss frontier and saw nothing out of the ordinary. At Vicenza on September 25 Mussolini declared in a speech that Italy had not taken any military measures. He added, however, "if others continue to call up reservists, and if there are further concentrations of fleets, you will not be surprised if Italy takes similar measures."

According to the account given by Count Ciano, the Foreign Minister, on November 30, a partial mobilization was ordered for September 27. It involved the calling up of some 300,000 men. On the 28th, according to Count Ciano, the fleet was ready for action.

An official Italian statement issued on October 3, however, contradicts both Mussolini's assertion on September 25 that no military measures had been taken, and Count Ciano's date for the partial mobilization. The statement of October 3 announced that the men called up during the past *two weeks* would be released after October 10. Two weeks back from October 3 gives September 19. That was the date on which the French Cabinet accepted the Anglo-French plan for the partition of Czechoslovakia. There was certainly no reason for Italy to take military measures on that date. If measures were taken from then on the statements of Mussolini and Count Ciano are both incorrect.

My own impression is that, in fact, very little was done in Italy. I was in Trieste on September 28, and it is hardly conceivable that this big port and naval base would have shown absolutely no evidence of military or naval preparations if these were actually going on. In fact, however, there was no such evidence. Similarly, on the following day all the towns in Northern Italy through which I passed were

CZECHOSLOVAKIA PREPARES FOR WAR

completely peaceful. It is possible that some activity might have been noticeable on the Italian-French frontier. But in view of the absence at the time of any reports of Italian military preparations, which it would hardly have been possible to conceal—for even Hungary's limited measures immediately became known abroad—it is difficult to believe that Italy was prepared for any sort of active intervention in September last year.

(ii) "WITHOUT THEM AND AGAINST THEM"

At 12.30 A.M. on Friday, September 30, Germany, Britain, France, and Italy signed a document which converted large areas of Czechoslovakia into German territory. Czechoslovakia, which might have been supposed to have some interest in the matter, did not sign this document, which, described as an 'agreement,' was, in fact, a peace treaty dictated to a country which had not even lost a war.

In Prague on Friday morning the newspaper account of the Munich meeting consisted largely of blank paper. The censors were afraid of violent public demonstrations unless the news was broken gently by the Government itself.

At midday President Beneš and the Government met to consider the Munich decision, which had been communicated to them by Mr Newton. After a brief discussion Czechoslovakia's reply was given :

The Czechoslovak Government, after having considered the decisions of the conference in Munich, taken without them and against them, find no other possibility but to accept, and have nothing to add.

In the afternoon, as the news of the Munich decision got out, processions formed in the streets to demonstrate, and it was considered advisable for General Syrový to explain the position. At 5 P.M. the loud-speakers in the Wenceslas Square once again brought tragic tidings to the inhabitants of Prague.

Citizens and soldiers ! [the Prime Minister said] . . . I am living through the hardest hour of my life ; I am carrying

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

out the most painful task, in comparison with which death would be easy. But precisely because I have fought, and because I know under what conditions a war is won, I must tell you frankly . . . that the forces opposed to us at this moment compel us to recognize their superior strength and to act accordingly. . . .

In Munich four European Great Powers met and decided to demand of us the acceptance of new frontiers, according to which the German areas of our State would be taken away. We had the choice between desperate and hopeless defence, which would have meant the sacrifice not only of the adult generation, but also of women and children, and the acceptance of conditions which in their ruthlessness, and because they were imposed by pressure without war, have no parallel in history. We desired to make a contribution to peace ; we would gladly have made it. But not by any means in the way it has been forced upon us.

But we were abandoned, and were alone. . . . Deeply moved, all your leaders considered, together with the army and the President of the Republic, all the possibilities which remained. They recognized that in choosing between narrower frontiers and the death of the nation it was their sacred duty to save the life of our people, so that we may not emerge weakened from these terrible times, and so that we may remain certain that our nation will gather itself together again, as it has done so often in the past. . . . Let us all see that our State re-establishes itself soundly within its new frontiers, and that its population is assured of a new life of peace and fruitful labour. With your help we shall succeed. We rely upon you, and you have confidence in us.

That night of September 30 was perhaps the most melancholy of the whole week. After dark the streets, as during the past week, were lit only by the blue kerbside lanterns. But the black-out that night had lost its meaning, for there was no war. As a sign of mourning all theatres were closed and all concerts were cancelled ; no bands played in the *cafés* ; the radio stations broadcast nothing but half-hourly news bulletins.

General Krejčí, Commander-in-Chief, sought to console the Czechoslovak army in a broadcast proclamation :

We soldiers were hitherto the protector and pride of the nation. We must continue to remain so in these difficult

CZECHOSLOVAKIA PREPARES FOR WAR

times through which we are living. Western Europe, including our ally, demands categorically from us this sacrifice, in order that a world war may be averted.

None the less, up on the Czechoslovak-German frontier Czech officers shot themselves because they were so dismayed by the German triumph.

In Prague the crowds marched again with flags, crying, "Don't surrender ! Let us fight !" They gathered outside the hotel where Lord Runciman had stayed, and shouted, "Death to Runciman !" But the demonstrations were soon over. They were parades of despair rather than of violent anger. The mounted police outside the British and French Legations were not needed. The people were more in the mood for weeping than for rioting.

The full text of the Munich 'dictate,' as it came to be called—in strange reminder of post-Versailles Germany !—was published in Prague on October 1. Though much bitterness, especially towards France, persisted for some weeks, it was noteworthy how rapidly and with what clarity public opinion began to look to the future. The Clerical *Lidové Listy* said plainly :

The new European grouping does not mean only a severe loss to us. It means also a collapse of France's previous European policy. France loses us as an ally with fortified frontiers and 1,500,000 well-armed soldiers. Czechoslovakia too will now pursue a policy of neutrality towards its neighbours in pursuit of its own exclusive interests. We become a purely national state of Czechs and Slovaks, and as such will make a settlement with our neighbours. We evacuate our place between the two European fronts as they have hitherto been. If the two Axes, despite all hopes, should in the future come into conflict we are not the first in the firing-line. We shall not constitute the advance-guard for either one or the other.

The general opinion about France was expressed with some bitterness in the liberal *Lidové Noviny* :

Very well . . . if we are not allowed to sing with the angels we will howl with the wolves. The face of Europe is changing, and from now we will sit by as spectators at this poor play. We know now that France is no longer the France of 1914

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

or 1918. It has become a second-rate Power under the protectorate of Britain, and is menaced by Germany, Italy, and Spain. Farewell, France !

The appearance of a Four-Power grouping which took upon itself the settlement of Europe's affairs was tartly noted by the *Prager Tagblatt* :

This is the first time that the Four Power Group has come into action. And its first task was the reduction of Czechoslovakia. An amazing fact, since among the four Powers were three in whose ranks the Czechoslovak Legionaries fought during the World War, and since the young Republic for twenty years—often enough at a sacrifice and against its own interests—directed its policy in accordance with the two Western Powers.

The same paper provided what is perhaps the neatest of all descriptions of Czechoslovakia's sacrifice when it said : "A small state by becoming still smaller has made itself great in history."

Most foreign observers in Prague were surprised at the rapidity with which the Czechs recovered from their depression. Two jokes which were popular shortly after Munich indicated the resilience of spirit.

One was : "The Government has received a new ultimatum—from the Eskimos. They demand immediate annexation of the Prague Ice Stadium."

The other : "Where are you going on your scooter, little boy ?" "Please, sir, round the Republic." "Yes, but what are you going to do in the afternoon ?"

CHAPTER XI

THE PEACE IN PRACTICE

(i) THE GERMAN OCCUPATION

IN defending the Munich Agreement before the House of Commons Mr Chamberlain made much play with the benefits which would accrue to Czechoslovakia from the activities of the International Commission set up under the Agreement. He said :

The line up to which German troops will enter into occupation is no longer the line as laid down in the map which was attached to the Godesberg memorandum. It is a line which is to be fixed by an International Commission.

And again :

Under the Munich Agreement all plebiscite areas are to be defined by the International Commission. The criterion is to be the predominantly German character of the area, the interpretation of that phrase being left to the Commission. I am bound to say that the German line—the line laid down in the map—did take in a number of areas which could not be called predominantly German in character.

All this sounded most reasonable. Unfortunately for Czechoslovakia, however, the International Commission showed itself even more ready to gratify Hitler's every wish than even the Munich conference itself. The Commission quickly decided that no plebiscite at all should be held, and fixed a line for the new German frontier which gave Germany nearly 800,000 Czechs—a line which was almost exactly that of the Godesberg memorandum. Mr Chamberlain's phrase about " the predominantly German character of the area " became a complete mockery in regard to many thickly populated districts of Northern Bohemia and Northern and Southern Moravia.

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

In some places Germany actually got more territory than Hitler had demanded at Godesberg. This was made possible by what was nothing more nor less than a totally unjustifiable use of pre-War Austrian census statistics. The Godesberg memorandum had demanded that voting in the anticipated plebiscite should be limited to persons residing in the plebiscite areas on October 28, 1918, or born there before that date. The object of this demand of Hitler's was to exclude from voting all Czechs who had settled in the mixed-language areas since the establishment of the Republic. This important German demand was ignored in the Munich Agreement. What was or was not a predominantly German area was, as Mr Chamberlain said, left to the decision of the International Commission.

On October 6 in Berlin the Germans demanded that this question should be settled on the basis of the 1910 Austrian census. According to information given me by official quarters in Prague what happened then was this: Dr Mastný, the Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin, and his colleagues raised many objections. With maps and statistics they showed how tens of thousands of Czechs would be handed over to Germany. Had not Herr Hitler himself said, they argued, that Germany did not want any Czechs? Baron von Weizsäcker, Secretary of State in the German Foreign Office, listened for about three-quarters of an hour. Then, suddenly becoming bored, he said, "Oh, never mind all that! We'll make it so!" and drew a line on the map. The British, French, and Italian Ambassadors, who were the remaining members of the Commission, raised no effective objections, and there was nothing for the Czechoslovak representatives to do but say "yes" and retire.

The official Czechoslovak announcement on the Berlin meeting correctly said:

The line of occupation was presented to the Czechoslovak representatives on the Berlin Commission as a final decision of the Four Powers. Despite all objections and protests from our side, no alterations were made in the line. The demand that the Czechoslovak territory up to this line should be ceded to the German occupation troops was presented by the

representatives of the Four Powers as an ultimatum, with a brief time limit. . . . As the occupation line was described by the representatives of the Four Powers as the mere technical carrying out of the Munich Agreement, which had already been accepted by Czechoslovakia, and as no appeal is possible against the decision of the Berlin Commission in so far as concerns the line of occupation, nothing remained for the Czechoslovak Government but to accept this interpretation of the Munich Agreement as an irrevocable decision of the Great Powers and as an accomplished fact.

The line drawn by Baron von Weizsäcker, and accepted by the other Powers, gave a frontier such as might have been approximately justifiable in 1910, though even so it cut away towns and villages where no German had ever lived. But had the frontier been based, as in justice it should have been, on the 1930 census, the number of Czechs transferred to Germany would have been under 400,000 instead of 800,000. The use of the 1910 census was doubly unjustifiable, for, apart from the disregarding of the perfectly natural changes of the past twenty years of the Republic, the 1910 figures were, in any case, thoroughly unreliable. At that time nationality was decided on the basis of the language in customary use (*Umgangssprache*). Since the Czechs were then living under Austrian rule, were working largely for German-speaking employers, it was inevitable that they used German as the language of usual intercourse, and thus were automatically registered as Germans. Mr Wickham Steed has pointed out in a letter to *The Times* how he too was entered as a German because, working in Vienna as a newspaper correspondent, he naturally used German as his *Umgangssprache*. Thousands of people living in Bohemia and Moravia who were registered in 1910 as Germans reverted in official records to their true Czech nationality as soon as the Republic was established.

Even more decisive, however, than the 1910 statistics was—as immediately became obvious—Germany's determination to paralyse Czechoslovakia strategically by cutting the main road and railway communications, parts of which henceforth ran over German territory. The railway from Prague to Brno was cut, for instance, as also the lines

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

to Bratislava, the Slovak capital, and to Moravská Ostrava.

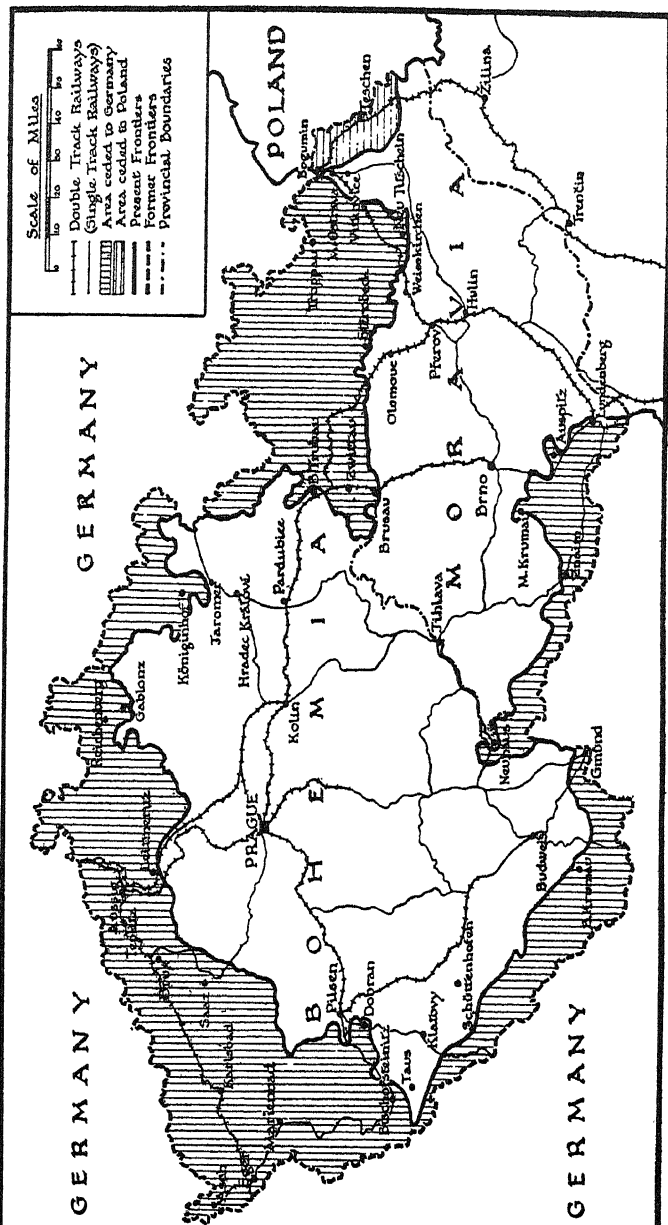
There was much bitterness among the Czechs when the decision of the International Commission became known. The bitterness was chiefly directed against Britain and France, for it was not the Ambassador of either of these Powers who had made any attempt to protest against the German demands, but Signor Attolico, the Italian. "Chamberlain's promise that the Godesberg demands would be modified if Prague accepted the Munich Agreement has not been kept," said the *Lidové Listy*. The organ of the Czechoslovak Social Democrats, *Právo Lidu*, said: "It sounds like a mockery when the British Prime Minister declares that Czechoslovakia was saved from disaster." The newspaper of Dr Beneš's former party—the Czechoslovak National Socialists—the *České Slovo*, declared: "The decisions of the Ambassadors' Conference are monstrous."

It is impossible to look at the frontier line as finally imposed by the International Commission without thinking that Czechoslovakia was plainly and simply tricked into acceptance of the Godesberg demands. On September 25 the Czechoslovak Government had declared through its Minister in London that the Godesberg demands were "absolutely and unconditionally unacceptable." On the 27th Mr Chamberlain, knowing fully the attitude of Czechoslovakia, nevertheless wrote to Hitler saying :

... I feel certain that you can get all essentials without war and without delay. . . . However much you distrust the Prague Government's intentions you cannot doubt the power of the British and French Governments to see that the promises are carried out fairly and fully and forthwith.¹

That letter was a plain hint to Hitler that matters would be 'arranged' in one way or another. It was a quiet wink, which said, in effect, "Just keep quiet and leave things to us. We'll fix it all right for you." For what did the phrase about "all essentials" mean? Who was to judge what was essential and what not? Clearly no one but Hitler. What

¹ Mr Chamberlain in the House of Commons, September 28, 1938.



TERRITORY CEDED TO GERMANY AND POLAND

was essential to him was contained in the Godesberg memorandum, and he got it.

The International Commission was simply the respectable-looking instrument for picking a lock which the Germans would have preferred merely to smash. The Commission was nothing more than the device used by the British and French Governments to present Hitler with "all essentials." The promises were certainly carried out "fully and forthwith." The question of fairness is a matter of standpoint. For the Germans all was doubtless well. For the Czechs, to speak of fairness was an insult. They had rejected the Godesberg demands, had mobilized, had accepted Munich under duress as a slight improvement in their lot, and then, when they had yielded up the greater part of the fortified frontier and could not even fight a hopeless war, they were after all forced to swallow the Godesberg ultimatum.

The actual handing over to Germany of the ceded areas provided the Sudeten German Party and the so-called "Free Corps" with an opportunity for jackal-like shooting, pillaging, and ill-treatment of Czechs and democratic Germans which aroused disgust among the Reichswehr troops themselves.

The Czechoslovak Ministry of Defence received innumerable reports of the cowardly and malevolent behaviour of many Sudeten Germans. On October 1, for instance, at Český Krumlov S.d.P. men attacked with machine-guns, and occupied, the municipal offices; at Krnov, near the Austrian frontier, they fired throughout the afternoon on the Czech customs post; in Southern Moravia the railway station at Šatov was fired on; near Znojmo shots were fired at a gang of workmen. For nearly a fortnight this sort of spiteful fighting went on. The S.d.P. and "Free Corps" gangsters felt themselves protected by the presence of the German army, and indulged every petty and private desire for vengeance on the Czechs who had so swiftly crushed the abortive Henleinist *putsch*. In justice to the Reichswehr it must be pointed out that the officers in charge of the occupation in many cases took active steps to suppress the Sudeten bandits. When the Český Krumlov incident of

THE PEACE IN PRACTICE

October 1, for example, was reported to the German military commander he bluntly expressed his far from complimentary opinion of the S.d.P., and ordered an armoured train and a garrison sufficient to keep order in the town. Czechs and democratic Germans who had fled then returned, thankful for the presence of the Reichswehr.

The Reichswehr was not able, however, to exercise control over the agents of the German Secret Police, who arrived in the army's wake. These Gestapo gentlemen set about making scores of arbitrary arrests. At Petržalka, near Bratislava, for instance, a barracks was turned into a concentration camp, and eighty people of the neighbourhood interned there. At Nový Jičín all the officials of the Sokol organization and of the Workers' Physical Training Association were arrested. Most of these people arrested were subsequently released, because it was eventually realized that such treatment would hardly make for peaceable relations between Czechs and Germans in the future.

The area finally occupied by Germany, according to the figures published by the Czechoslovak State Statistical Office on December 8, 1938, amounted to 28,680 square kilometres. This is nearly as much as the area of Belgium—30,437 square kilometres. The population lost to Germany, according to the same source, was 3,576,719, of whom 2,822,899 were Germans and 738,502 were Czechs.

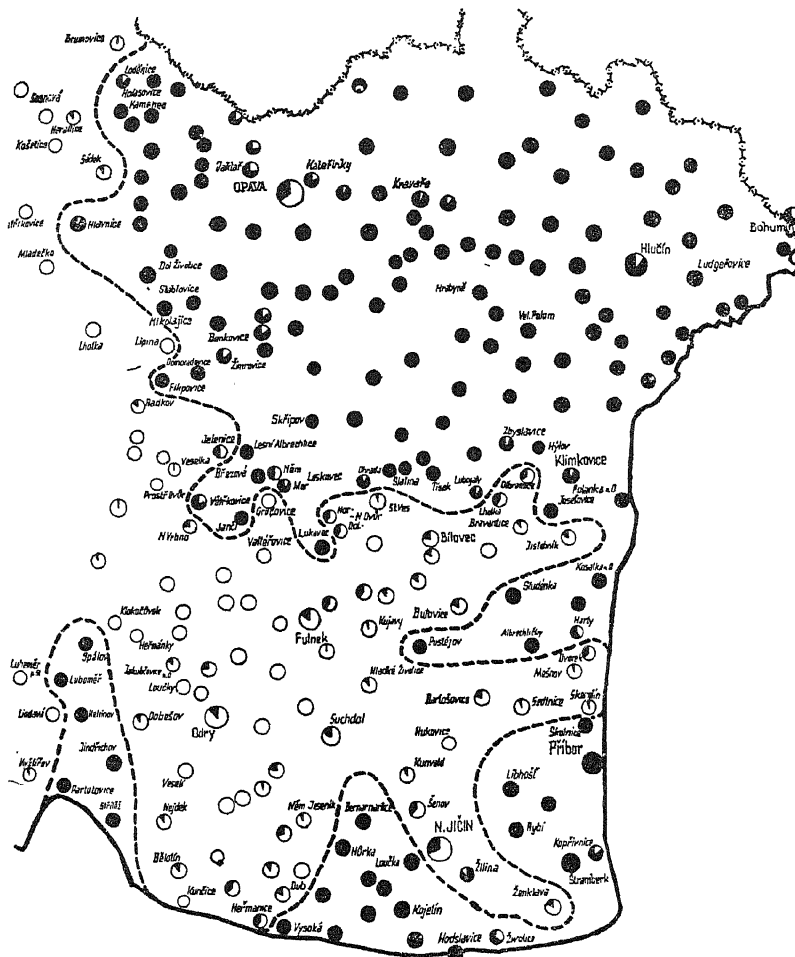
The Munich Agreement did not prevent Hitler getting the material spoils he had demanded at Godesberg, but it did perhaps serve a useful purpose in depriving him of the advertisement value of another 'conquering hero' entry, such as he had made into Vienna. Since the Sudetenland was evacuated by the Czechoslovak army in stages, Hitler and his Reichswehr could only advance slowly and according to schedule. The first steps over the frontier were taken at 2 P.M. on October 1 by some 1500 German soldiers. Hitler arrived at Eger on the 3rd, and on subsequent days he visited Karlsbad, Rumburg, and Jägerndorf. The progress of the German troops was slowed down by the fact that they first had to clear out of the way the lorries filled with stones, the tree-trunks, and the blocks of masonry

which the Czechs had put down as barricades when war seemed imminent, and which they had not removed before evacuating.

The Sudeten German Party naturally exerted every effort to collect cheering crowds to welcome the Führer. There were all the usual stage-effects of Nazi politics—banners strung across village streets, swastika flags, a brass band playing *Deutschland über Alles*, small girls in pinafores, chosen for their yellow pigtails and clean Nordic faces, to throw flowers in front of Hitler's motor-car, a cordon of soldiers and "Free Corps" men to line the route—for the Führer, beloved as he is, needs careful protection—and a green-garlanded, eagle-adorned archway at Asch telling Hitler that "Sudetenland Welcomes its Liberator." It was all very pretty, but the small size of the Sudeten towns, the absence of a considerable part of the population, and wet, windy weather made the whole business dim and second-rate. Compared with Austria, the Sudetenland was a poor show. Hitler most of the time looked tired and glum. His brief speeches to the Sudeten Germans were weakly rhetorical efforts much below his usual standard. He was put in a still worse humour by the fact that one of the bunches of flowers cast by a woman adorer hit him in the face and scratched a cheek. No one was allowed to carry flowers after that. After all, a bouquet might easily contain something more dangerous than rose thorns.

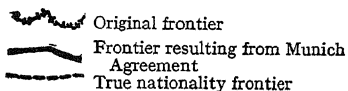
One individual who appeared to enjoy himself thoroughly was Konrad Henlein, who turned up in a beautiful uniform as Reich Commissar for the Sudeten territory, and made a nasty-minded speech on October 7, saying that he would imprison all political opponents "until they turn black." He threatened that "all those who fled and have been subsequently returned will be treated in the same way."

The German army was most interested in being able to take possession of Czechoslovakia's frontier fortresses, which had been closely modelled on France's Maginot Line. "Now at last," said a German major to a Reuter correspondent, "the plan of this system of fortifications is an open book to us." The Germans later subjected the concrete



MAP SHOWING CZECH AND GERMAN POPULATION IN THE OPAVA
(TROPPAU) DISTRICT, ILLUSTRATING A DECISION OF THE INTER-
NATIONAL COMMISSION IN BERLIN (SEE p. 234)

In this district Czechoslovakia lost five Czech towns with a population of 16,827 Czechs, and 158 other places with a population of 132,646 Czechs—in all 149,473 Czechs.



- Places entirely Czech
- ◐ Places with 70-90 per cent. Czech majority
- ◑ Places with 51-70 per cent. Czech majority
- Places entirely German or with Czech minority

forts to bombing and shelling tests, the results of which, I understand, showed that the German army would have had no light task in smashing through them.

As the German troops and Gestapo men entered, so did Social Democrats, Communists, Jews, and Czechs flee to the interior of Bohemia and Moravia. There were pathetic sights along the roads leading to Prague. Here, for instance, is a case known to me—one which will stand for thousands: A fifty-year-old Social Democrat coal-miner, blind as the result of a mine accident, walked with his wife fifty miles to Prague. All this way they pushed a barrow laden with pots and pans and bedding—their sole possessions. In Prague the old man's first action was to call at the offices of his party and ask where he should now pay his contributions. Unable to remain in Prague, the old couple then trudged another sixty miles to Píbram, where they hoped to stay with relatives.

In terrible anxiety were those Democratic Germans who had been members of the armed Republican Defence, who had actively assisted the Czech authorities to suppress the Henleinist *putsch*, who had voluntarily helped to defend the frontier. These dared not, for their lives, return to the Sudetenland. For a few days there was confusion and panic among these and other refugees when it was still understood that a plebiscite was to be held in certain frontier regions. The reason was that the Czechoslovak authorities, naturally anxious to have as many anti-Henlein people in the plebiscite regions as possible, were sending refugees back to their homes. Fortunately the Czechs quickly agreed that those in danger because of their political activities need not go back, and the decision to abandon the plebiscite idea finally settled the matter.

The number of refugees was difficult to determine exactly, but the Secretary of the German Social Democrat Party told me that within a few days of the Nazi occupation 4000 of his party's members had left the Sudeten country. The total number of refugees in Prague alone at that time was about 80,000. This included a considerable number of Czechs and non-political Germans, mainly women and children,

who had left their homes from fear of war, and who subsequently went back. The number of Jews who fled from the areas ceded to Germany and Poland was 16,000, according to the Palestine Office in Prague. The Czechoslovak Government, the Red Cross, and charitable organizations worked hard to provide food and shelter for the refugees, and made their lot as bearable as possible. But the plight of the refugee is inevitably a wretched one.

I talked to members of a group of sixty Germans from the Karlsbad district who were lodged in barns and farm-houses at Stěchovice, some thirty miles from Prague. One of them, a Social Democrat, told me how he had crept for hours on hands and knees, seeking cover in the woods of the hilly country round Karlsbad, desperately anxious to escape the Nazis. For two days he ate nothing.

I spoke to this man in a room of the village inn at Stěchovice, where sleeping space had been provided for eight women among the refugees. The beds were bundles of straw covered with old pieces of cloth. The room was unheated and bitterly cold. Two girls were there, shivering in thin, threadbare clothes. One of them told me their story. "We used to work in a glove factory," she said. "We left so quickly we didn't have time to bring anything with us. We've only got what we are wearing. Most of us didn't have any food for days." The men, she said, were nearly all out looking for a place with a fire where they could stay, as there was no means of heating the room at the inn. "I would so like a fire," she said. The food they got was not at all bad. They had coffee and bread for breakfast, and two other meals a day. The Czechoslovak authorities were paying the inn-keeper a shilling a day for their board and lodging.

Where were they going eventually? I asked. One of the girls said to Russia. The other said to America. The man had no idea. All he knew was that neither he nor any of his comrades dared to go back to the Sudetenland. All that awaited them there was either a bullet or the concentration camp. Such human disasters as these—men and women driven from their homes and their jobs, left penniless, dependent on charity—were the very first fruits of the Munich Agreement.

(ii) POLAND GRABS HER SHARE

The cessions to Germany were not the end of the changes brought about by the Munich Agreement. Poland and Hungary, obsequious hangers-on of the Third Reich, lost no time in grabbing their shares of the spoils. The Poles, in particular, showed themselves masters of the art of hitting a man when he is down and appropriating his watch and chain.

On Friday, September 30, the Polish Minister in Prague presented the Czechoslovak Government with an ultimatum demanding the surrender of the part of the Teschen district of Silesia which lay west of the Olza river, in Czechoslovakia. Prague was given twenty-four hours in which to answer. Simultaneously with the presentation of the ultimatum Polish broadcasting-stations announced that if Poland did not get satisfaction the Government would "resort to measures which may have the gravest consequences." In Polish Teschen an official wireless announcement said: "The hour is approaching when Polish troops will free the Poles in Czechoslovakia with their fixed bayonets."

The harassed Czechoslovak Cabinet and President Beneš duly assembled and accepted yet another humiliation—a humiliation which was all the worse because the Czechs knew that the Poles by themselves would never have dared to threaten Czechoslovakia. They were able to bluster and 'talk big' only because of German support, and because Czechoslovakia was already down and out.

The area which Poland demanded contained less than 80,000 Poles. Formerly part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it had been apportioned to the Czechoslovak Republic by the Paris Conference of Ambassadors in 1920, partly because it lay within the historical frontiers of the Bohemian Crown, partly because the population was predominantly Czech, and partly because its hard coal mines and heavy industry were deemed necessary to the Republic. The Polish minority consisted chiefly of miners who had emigrated from Poland.

Faithful imitators of Germany, the Poles at the end of September had also formed a so-called "Volunteer Corps"

THE PEACE IN PRACTICE

from the Teschen area and distributed these irregulars along the frontier. They proved, however, even more of a nuisance to the Polish regular army than the Sudetens had to the Reichswehr, and were quickly disbanded.

The Polish occupation of Teschen began on October 4, and was completed by October 11. That Poland's gains were not altogether welcome to Germany was, however, made plain by the haste with which Poland seized Bohumin, the important railway junction for communication between Czechoslovakia and Polish and German Silesia. The Poles occupied this town on October 9—two days before they were due to do so. The reason for so doing was declared in Warsaw to be the fear of the Czechoslovak authorities in the town that Communist disorders might occur. There was something comical about this old and threadbare excuse in the particular circumstances of the moment, since the real reason for Polish haste was fear that Germany might seize the town on account of its German minority, which is actually larger than the Polish minority there. So nervous did the Poles become about the possibilities of a German *putsch* that they mounted artillery and machine-guns on the railway outside Bohumin, and even dared to arrest some dozen members of the local Henleinist group, who had been conducting propaganda for the cession of the town to Germany.

Poland, after having the impudence to demand also the district of Frýdek, where the Polish minority is about 1 per cent. of the population, finally acquired 1086 square kilometres of territory with a population of 230,282. Of these, according to the Czechoslovak Statistical Office, only 76,303, or 30 per cent., are Poles, the remainder being Czechs, Germans, and Jews.¹

¹ The percentages of the various nationalities in the different districts of the Teschen territory are, according to the 1930 census, as follows :

	<i>Czechs</i>	<i>Germans</i>	<i>Poles</i>
Bohumin . . .	73·5	15·5	9·8
Frýstát . . .	60·4	4·2	34·4
Česky Těšín . .	45·6	10·7	42·13
Jablunkov . . .	31·1	1·7	66·8

On ethnographical grounds the only district to which Poland had any claim was Jablunkov.

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

The Poles celebrated their acquisitions by dismissing all the Czech workers in the coal mines, with the result that the output of the mines has dropped considerably, as the Polish miners were not skilled in the use of the mechanized methods introduced by the Czechs. Germans employed in chemical and other works in this highly industrialized area have also been dismissed, and, in general, the present situation in Teschen is one of great uncertainty, with much discontent not only among the Czechs, but also among the Germans. Reliable information received in Prague indicates that the Poles themselves appear to fear that their tenure of Teschen will be brief, and that in the next Central European crisis the territory will either revert to Czechoslovakia or be taken by Germany. No money is being spent by the Polish authorities, and anything of value in the former Czech offices and public buildings is being removed for use in other parts of Poland. I was told by a responsible Prague official who specializes in Polish affairs that even the parquet flooring in buildings surrendered by the Czechs has been taken away !

(iii) CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S WAR WITH HUNGARY

The settlement of Hungary's demands for frontier revision was remarkable in that it involved Czechoslovakia in a miniature war with Hungarian terrorists and irregulars in the remote eastern parts of the Republic—a war in which many hundreds of Hungarians were killed and wounded, but of which extraordinarily little became known to the outside world.

The Munich Agreement had contained an annexe declaring that

the problem of the Polish and Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia, if not settled in three months by agreement between the respective Governments, shall form the subject of another meeting of the heads of the Governments of the Four Powers here present.

In accordance with this, the Hungarians lost no time in demanding, on October 2, that Czechoslovakia should enter

into immediate negotiation. Arrangements were then made for a conference between the two countries to begin in Komárno on October 9.

The revision of the frontier between Hungary and Czechoslovakia should have been a straightforward matter. That it was not so was due to the inordinate ambition of Hungary, egged on by Poland, to recover not merely the Magyar minority in Czechoslovakia, but to annex the whole province of Ruthenia, on the ground that this had once formed part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Hungary and Poland would then have obtained a common frontier.

On October 6 Count Csáky, Secretary-General of the Hungarian Foreign Office, went to Warsaw and obtained the support of Colonel Beck, the Polish Foreign Minister, for such a demand. The motive inspiring the Hungarians and Poles was fear of Germany. After Czechoslovakia, they felt, it would be their turn next. Germany would use subjugated Czechoslovakia as a base against them both. Therefore, the argument went, let us reduce as much as possible the area of Czechoslovakia, and let us get a common frontier. To further promote this aim the Hungarians and Poles made clumsy attempts to persuade the Slovaks to break away altogether from the Czechs and form an 'independent' state of their own. Such a state, being economically extremely weak, might conceivably have been brought under the control of Poland and Hungary. Hungary believed she could obtain Ruthenia by getting the Prague Government to accept a plebiscite in this province. The support of the Ruthenian Premier Brody for the plebiscite idea had been purchased by Budapest.

With these aims in view the Hungarian delegation, consisting of de Kánya, the Foreign Minister, Count Teleki, and numbers of experts, arrived at Komárno to meet the Czechoslovak representatives, who were headed by Dr Tiso, Premier of Slovakia.

It soon became plain that the Hungarians were not really interested in a reasonable settlement for the transfer of Czechoslovakia's 700,000 Magyars to Hungary. The representatives of Budapest presented a map showing their idea

of what the new frontier should be—a map at which the Slovak Ministers merely laughed. The Hungarians demanded first of all the Slovak capital, Bratislava, despite the fact that its population is only 16 per cent. Magyar. They then wanted the famous centre of Slovak nationalism, Nitra, as well as such important towns as Košice (with only 18 per cent. Magyars), Užhorod, the capital of Ruthenia (with 17·8 per cent. Magyars), and Mukačevo and Sevljuš, the only other towns of size in Ruthenia. Altogether the Hungarians wanted 14,106 square kilometres, containing a population of 1,346,010, of which only half, or 678,000, were Magyar. The Hungarian claim was based, like the German one, on 1910 census figures. The objections to the use of these figures are even stronger than in the case of the Austrian ones for Bohemia and Moravia, for the artificial ‘ Magyarization ’ of Slovak towns in Hungary before the War had proceeded at a furious rate—a circumstance which has been openly admitted in official Hungarian publications.

The Czechoslovak delegation rejected the Hungarian demands and put forward counter-proposals, at which the Hungarians in their turn also laughed disdainfully. The Czechoslovak delegation offered the cession of a frontier strip of some 5200 square kilometres, with a population of 345,000.

On October 13 the Komárno negotiations broke down. The Hungarian Foreign Minister declared that the gap between the Czechoslovak offer and the Hungarian proposal was so great as to make further negotiation useless. His Government, therefore, considered the conference closed, and would apply to the Four Powers for a swift settlement.

While the negotiations were still in progress, on October 12, events occurred in Slovakia which indicated what the Hungarian game really was. Towards midnight on the 12th the first of a series of outrages by Hungarian troops and terrorists was perpetrated. An attack was made by an armed band on an isolated railway station near the Slovak-Ruthenian border, and three Czech soldiers were carried off into Hungary.

On October 14 the Hungarian Cabinet met and approved

the calling up of five classes of troops, amounting in all to 300,000 men. The excuse given in the official *communiqué* was that owing to the breakdown of the Komárno conference a situation had arisen such

that the threats made in the course of the negotiations by Czechoslovakia, and also the military measures taken by Czechoslovakia, made it necessary for Hungary, in order to increase her military security, to take further measures.

The idea that the crippled Republic, only a fortnight after Munich, was in a position, or had any desire, to threaten anyone was, of course, ridiculous. The calling up of the Hungarian troops was an attempt to apply pressure on the Republic, in order to squeeze out the maximum of territorial concessions. The attempt at stirring up trouble within Czechoslovakia had the same purpose. It is possible too that the Hungarians thought of trying the "marching in to restore order" method which the Nazis had employed in Austria and attempted in the Sudeten country. On the day of the Hungarian mobilization representatives of Budapest hastened to Berlin and Rome in search of support, and the campaign of provocation and terrorism in Ruthenia and Slovakia got under way.

The Budapest radio put out statements urging the union of Slovakia and Ruthenia with Hungary. Along with this went appeals to the Slovaks to rise against the Czechs. A mobile transmitter was driven up and down the frontier. It announced itself as the "Slovak Mobile Radio Station," and broadcast irredentist discourses in the Slovak language. When this had no effect the Hungarians broadcast stories about mass desertions into Hungary of Czech soldiers, in the hope that some might thereby be inspired to desert. This also did not happen. The Hungarians tried another stunt. A so-called "Order of Heroes" was allegedly being formed. This was supposed to consist of war veterans, decorated for bravery in the Great War, who were living in the part of Czechoslovakia desired by Hungary. All such men of Magyar nationality who were no longer in the Czechoslovak service were to join the "Order of Heroes," were to agitate for cession to Hungary, and were

promised free land when the transfer had been effected. No one responded to this appeal either.

Hungarian aeroplanes then flew over Slovakia distributing leaflets—a typical example of which said :

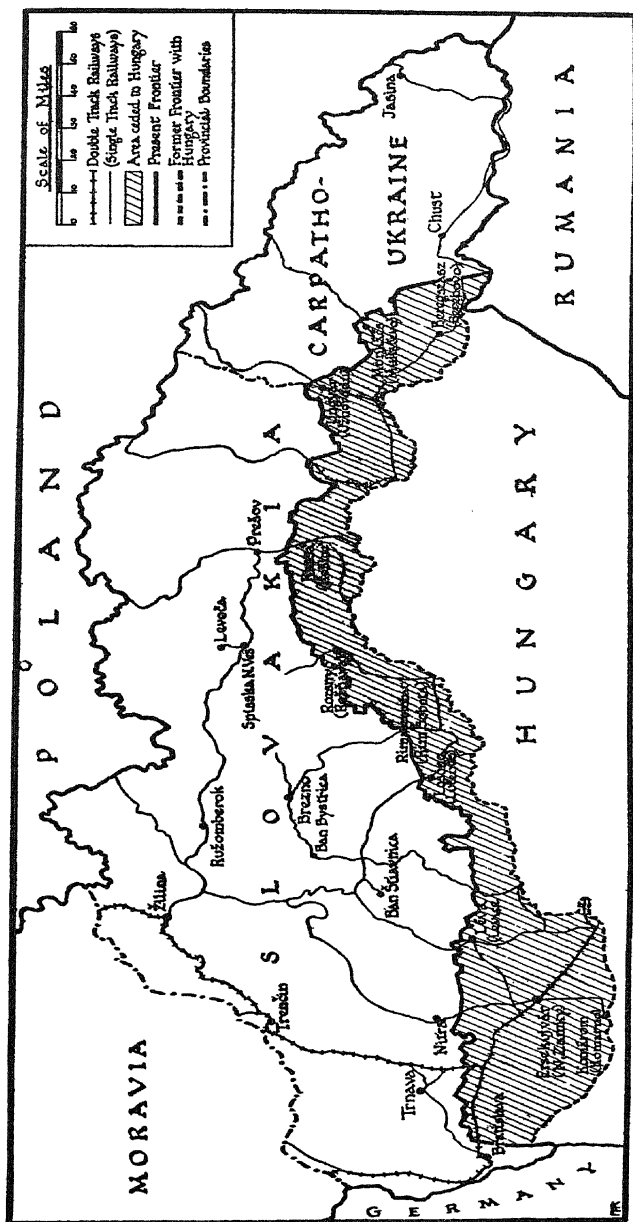
Brother Slovaks ! Destroy the railways and post-offices, set fire to shops, desert from the army, fight for an independent Slovakia, for the time is getting short. Brother Slovaks, after twenty years of bitter struggle the moment has come for us to create a free Slovak State. Demand the formation of a free Slovak State. Better one day of battle than decades under the Czech yoke !

Similar leaflets in Ruthenian were dropped at Tačovo, along the river Tisa.

All this propaganda had, however, no effect, and the Hungarians were obliged to resort to plain terrorism. Attempts, sometimes successful, were made to blow up bridges. On October 12 charges of high explosives were laid on the railway line between Užhorod, the Ruthenian capital, and Kapušany, with the intention of blowing up a local passenger-train. Gangs of Hungarians, armed with machine-guns and hand-grenades, lay in ambush for Czech *gendarmérie* and military patrols. Others came over the frontier at night, opened fire, and then fled back into Hungary. This went on for some days. The meagre information that came through to Prague spoke of one or two Czechs killed here and there, of a few Hungarians killed and captured. But after the Sudeten *putsch* the Czech public was not particularly moved by Hungarian efforts at imitating the Henleinists, especially as the disorders were occurring in a remote part of the Republic little known to the average Czech.

The first indication that the trouble in Ruthenia might be on a bigger scale than was generally supposed came in a bulletin issued by the Ministry of Defence, which said :

In the district of Slanky [twelve miles east of Berehovo] Czechoslovak units have captured 297 Hungarian terrorists, comprising 26 officers, 62 non-commissioned officers, one officer cadet, and 205 soldiers—all reservists of the Hungarian army—and four Czechoslovak subjects of Hungarian nation-



TERRITORY CEDED TO HUNGARY

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

ality. It is shown by the documents seized that the activities of the Hungarian terrorists were directed by the General Staff of the War Ministry. Interrogation of the prisoners established the fact that the terrorists had been assembled and instructed at Kisvarda, near Heyasbanda, and that they are commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Istvan Hejas, of the Hungarian army. For the instruction of the terrorists the camp was provided with some thirty officers of the Hungarian army of the ranks of lieutenant and captain.

In Ruthenia some 2000 Hungarian terrorists are scattered. . . .

The Defence Ministry bulletin made no mention of any dead or wounded, and yet it was clear that nearly 300 men could not be captured without a considerable amount of fighting and inevitable casualties on both sides.

As a result of the disturbances caused by the German and Polish occupation communications with the eastern end of the Republic were very bad at this time and information from Ruthenia was hard to get. It gradually became clear, however, from papers found on prisoners that terrorists were being trained at half a dozen camps in Hungary, at Romhány, Magyaróvár, and elsewhere. They belonged to a so-called "Szabad Csapat"—"Volunteer Corps"—organization. The men were army reservists called up in the usual way. They were drafted to the camps, there made to change their uniforms for civilian clothes, given instructions, provided with machine-guns, rifles, automatics, hand-grenades, and explosives, and sent over the frontier to get on with the job. One camp, at Vásárosnány, contained 3000 men. Here, on October 3—*i.e.*, before even the Komárno negotiations had begun—the plan of campaign was discussed by eight active officers and twenty-two reserve officers of the Hungarian army. The meeting was attended by a former Hungarian Minister of the Interior.

One of the Prague papers towards the end of October published a list of fifteen names and addresses of Hungarians who had been captured, and the Bratislava radio station broadcast gramophone records of statements made by prisoners. These exposures made Budapest assertions that there were no Hungarian subjects in Czechoslovakia, and that the disorders were the result of righteous indigna-

tion among the Magyar minority, look rather silly. Budapest accordingly found a new excuse. It was possible, said radio announcements, that a certain number of young men had crossed the frontier, but the Hungarian Government declined any responsibility for their actions.

No one in Prague, outside the Government, knew at this time the total number of Hungarian young men engaged in terrorism, nor just how much fighting there had been in Ruthenia and Slovakia. Then on October 23 I happened to be speaking to an official of the post-office censorship department, which had been temporarily set up after Munich. This official mentioned that he had been looking at a batch of photographs of Hungarian prisoners.

"How many prisoners have been taken?" I asked.

"About 400."

"And do you have any idea of how many were killed?"

"Oh, yes—round about 1000 or 1200."

This was extraordinary news, and I expressed incredulity. But my informant persisted in his statement. He did not seem to think the numbers any more than were to be expected after a fortnight's 'mopping up' by the Czechoslovak army. He added that some 13,000 Hungarians were estimated to have been trained for terrorist activities.

I made further inquiries, and found that, though it was an exaggeration to speak of 1000 or 1200 dead, somewhere between 700 and 800 would be about right. I accordingly sent a message to this effect to London. It made a front-page story in the *Herald*: "700 Killed in Secret Army's War on Czechs."

Friends in Prague, at the Legation and in newspaper circles, thought I had been doing some unfortunate mental arithmetic and meant seventeen instead of 700. But as communications with Ruthenia gradually got back to normal more and more information about the fighting between Hungarians and Czechs came through to Prague. It was discovered further that Poles were coming over the frontier and joining in the fun. Polish weapons and ammunition were captured. Then a Czech officer told me of how his particular cavalry patrol of eighteen had been reduced to

six as the result of skirmishes with the terrorists. He was bitter about the savage habits of these bandits. His troop had come upon the body of a Czech soldier with one of the ears cut off. After a search in the neighbourhood they captured half a dozen Hungarians, and learned from them that the terrorists were paid thirty pengoes (about 25s.) for each Czech killed. As proof of their successes the terrorists cut off ears and took them back to Hungary. On learning this, said the Czech officer, he promptly had all the prisoners shot.

Finally, I had the satisfaction of hearing a member of the British Intelligence Service say, "You were right, after all, about the Hungarians killed. I have just been speaking to a Czech officer, and he told me that he alone counted 400 dead."

While the fighting was still going on in Ruthenia and Eastern Slovakia the Slovak Government announced that they were prepared to resume negotiations with Hungary, and would make a new offer. This was submitted on October 22. It accepted 80 per cent. of the Hungarian claims to territory, and would have resulted in only 111,000 Magyars remaining in Czechoslovakia, while 218,000 Slovaks and Ruthenians would have been transferred to Hungary. The Hungarians replied that the areas Czechoslovakia offered to cede should be occupied by Hungarian troops at once, and that plebiscites should be held in all districts where the Hungarian and Czechoslovak ideas of the new frontier differed. There could be a lasting settlement and friendly co-operation between the Danubian peoples, said the Hungarian Note, only if all the nationalities of Eastern Czechoslovakia were allowed to decide their future by plebiscites.

In this suggestion was concealed the still persisting idea that Hungary might, through purchased votes, obtain the whole of Ruthenia.

Budapest added that if Prague would not agree to plebiscites the question in dispute should be submitted to international arbitration.

Czechoslovakia replied that it did not consent to the

plebiscite idea, but accepted arbitration by Germany and Italy. This answer was sent on October 27. On the same day Dr Brody, the Ruthenian Premier, was arrested on a charge of high treason. His enthusiasm, alone of all the Cabinet Ministers, for a plebiscite in Ruthenia was found to be inspired by Hungarian money.

The arbitral award was given by Italy and Germany at a brief conference in Vienna on November 2. The meeting revealed a distinct stress between the two Axis Powers, for Rome was strongly supporting all Hungary's claim, while Germany, with thoughts of a future Ukrainian State, had no intention of allowing Hungary to swallow up the Ukrainian-inhabited autonomous province of Ruthenia, and, by a common Polish-Hungarian frontier, to block Germany's eastward path. Neither were the Germans prepared to let Bratislava, with its German minority, go to Hungary. The German viewpoint was clearly expressed in von Ribbentrop's attitude at the conference. While he was all smiles and cordiality towards Dr Tiso, the Slovak Premier, he turned an exceedingly cold shoulder on the Hungarian Foreign Minister, de Kánya. Count Ciano, the Italian Foreign Minister, came out of the conference room full of glee because he had succeeded in obtaining for the Hungarians Užhorod and Mukačevo, the chief towns in Ruthenia, and Košice, the most important town in Eastern Slovakia. The needs of Axis solidarity had made it impossible for Germany to oppose too vigorously Italy's demands for her favourite.

By the Vienna decision Hungary got an additional 11,830 square kilometres of territory and 992,496 former Czechoslovak subjects. Of these, 587,692 were Magyars—no less than 288,803 were Slovaks. The remainder were Ruthenes, Jews, and Germans. Hungary got nearly all the agriculturally productive land of Ruthenia and 220,000 of its inhabitants.

CHAPTER XII

CZECHOSLOVAKIA BECOMES CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

(i) THE POLITICAL STRUCTURE

OBSERVANT persons noticed that the Bill dealing with the autonomy of Slovakia which was presented to the National Assembly in Prague on November 17, 1938, did not refer to the Republic as Czechoslovakia, but as Czecho-Slovakia. A hyphen had been inserted. That hyphen was symbolic of the profound change in the internal structure of the country brought about by the Munich Agreement. The hyphen made its first appearance in this Slovak Autonomy Bill, and from that moment the Republic's name became officially Czecho-Slovakia. The new autonomous status of the Slovaks was thereby made plain.

A Bill for Slovak autonomy had been presented to Parliament in the first half of 1938 by the late Mgr. Andrej Hlinka, leader of the autonomist Slovak People's Party, and during the crisis at the end of September and the beginning of October this party seized the opportunity to press their demands upon the Prague Government. In this the Slovaks were joined by the Ruthenians, who demanded that the promise of autonomy contained in the Republic's original Constitution should be immediately and completely fulfilled.

Bills granting autonomy to Slovakia and Ruthenia were adopted by the Chamber of Deputies on November 19 by 144 votes to 25 and 146 to 23 respectively, and were voted by the Senate on November 21.

Both Acts were on the same pattern, and were concerned to define the status of the two provinces, Slovakia and Ruthenia, within the Republic, and to distinguish between the affairs which lay within the competence of the provincial Governments and those which were reserved to the Central

CZECHOSLOVAKIA BECOMES CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

Government of the whole Republic in Prague. Apart from certain special points of interest to Ruthenia alone, what applies to Slovakia applies also to the other province.

The "Constitutional Act on the Autonomy of Slovakia," officially published on November 24, describes the province as "an autonomous integral part of the Czecho-Slovak Republic." The official language and the language of instruction in Slovakia is Slovak. Czechs in Slovakia may, however, use the Czech language in official business. All language rights granted to the minorities under the St Germain Treaty of 1919 remain intact.

Elections in Slovakia are by universal, direct, secret vote. The electorate consists of all persons over the age of twenty-one, and one member of the Slovak Provincial Diet is elected for every 20,000 votes cast, or fraction of 20,000 over three-quarters of this figure. The Slovak Provincial Government consists of five members, and is an integral part of the Central Government of the Republic. Members of the Provincial Government are appointed by the President of the Republic on the proposal of the Præsidium of the Slovak Diet. Governmental and executive power in Slovakia is exercised by the Slovak Government, which is responsible to the Slovak Diet.

An important clause of the Act gives the Slovaks extensive powers of control over decisions of the National Assembly. This clause says that a decision of the National Assembly to make constitutional changes is only valid if the majority constitutionally required for such changes includes also a proportionate majority of the members of the National Assembly elected in Slovakia. Similarly, the election of a President of the Republic requires the consent not merely of the constitutionally determined majority of members of Parliament, but also of a proportionate majority of Slovak members.

These provisions guarantee that the status of Slovakia within the Republic cannot be changed without the consent of the Slovaks themselves. Further to emphasize that the Central Government must enjoy the confidence of the

Slovaks, one-third of the Slovak deputies may propose a motion of 'no confidence.'

The Slovak Diet decides the Constitution of Slovakia within the framework of the legal system of the Czecho-Slovak Republic. An alteration in the territory of Slovakia is only possible with the consent of two-thirds of the majority in the Slovak Diet. The consent of the Diet is necessary for international treaties concerned exclusively with the cultural, religious, or economic affairs of Slovakia.

Officials of the central State administration in Slovakia are to be primarily Slovaks. Proportional representation of Slovakia is guaranteed in all the central institutions, councils, commissions, and other organizations. Similarly, Slovakia is to be proportionally represented on all international organizations in which the Czecho-Slovak Republic participates. Slovak soldiers are, in peace-time, to be, so far as possible, stationed in Slovakia.

Finally, the legislative authority in Slovakia of the Slovak Provincial Diet covers all questions which are not included in the following list of matters reserved to the National Assembly, which has legislative power for the whole Republic :

1. The Constitution, its integral parts, and questions concerning the activity of the common Governmental, legislative, and executive organs.
2. Relations of Czecho-Slovakia with other countries, declaration of war and conclusion of peace, trade and tariff policy, exports and imports.
3. National defence.
4. Questions of State citizenship, of emigration and immigration, of passports.
5. Currency, measures and weights, patents.
6. Customs duty matters.
7. Communications.
8. Posts and telegraphs, the Post Office, Savings Bank, and the postal-order service.
9. The common budget, the State debt, and the approval of loans for common needs of the State.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA BECOMES CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

10. Taxes, in so far as they cover common expenditure.
11. Monopolies, common State undertakings. Excluded from these, however, are the State forests, mines, smelting works, and spas which become the property of the province in which they are situated.
12. The juridical settlement of economic and financial questions which may be required to ensure equal conditions of competition in business undertakings.

The National Assembly can also deal with other questions of common interest, providing the consent of the Slovak Diet is obtained.

The granting of autonomy to Slovakia and Ruthenia turned Czecho-Slovakia from a highly centralized State into a decentralized, federal one. The Central Government common to all three sections of the Republic consists, apart from the Prime Minister, merely of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Finance, and Defence. The Deputy Prime Minister of the Central Government is a Slovak.

After the establishment of a federal organization of the State the most important measure affecting the whole Republic is the Enabling Act, which was passed by 148 votes to 16 on December 14. The essence of this Enabling Act is contained in Article 1, which says :

The President of the Republic is empowered, on the unanimous proposal of the Government, including the agreement of a majority of the Slovak Provincial Government, to issue in the form of decrees having constitutional force new texts of those provisions of the Czecho-Slovak Constitution and of other constitutional laws which may require alteration as a result of the new relationships. In the same way he is empowered to take such measures as have hitherto required a constitutional law in so far as they are made necessary by the new relationships. This authorization does not extend to alterations in the constitutional law on the autonomy of Slovakia, unless the Slovak Provincial Diet should agree thereto.

Article II of the Act authorizes the Government to take whatever measures it deems necessary by means of decrees, even if such measures normally require the passage of a Bill. This authority does not include alterations in the

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

Constitution, which, by Article I, are reserved to the President. Such decrees as affect the whole Republic have also to have the consent of a majority of the Slovak Government, and to be signed by the President of the Republic, and by at least one member each of the Slovak and Ruthenian Governments. The Slovak and Ruthenian Governments are empowered to issue decrees regarding matters affecting only their own provinces.

The Enabling Act remains in force for two years.

With the passing of this measure the Czecho-Slovak Parliament has lost most of its previous importance. Government decisions are now taken by the Cabinet alone and made known by proclamation.

Two bodies have been established, however, outside the Government, which are important in regard to the settlement of economic and financial questions. These are (1) the State Economic Council, consisting of some fifty leading business-men, bankers, financial experts, and representatives of the trade unions and co-operatives from all parts of the Republic; and (2) the Parliamentary Economy and Control Committee.

As economic affairs now take first place in the nation's interest the establishment of these two bodies has provided a forum for the discussion of what matters most to the Republic. In economic and financial questions these organizations in many ways take the place of Parliament. The State Economic Council, with a President and Vice-President appointed by the Government, has only an advisory capacity, but the Parliamentary Economy and Control Committee has the task of checking all State expenditure, of examining the Finance Minister's draft budget, and, in general, of co-operating with the Government in seeing that the national income is not wasted. The Committee consists of nine members of Parliament—and nine substitutes—who are chosen from all parties. The Committee had existed before the 1938 crisis, but it has now been made a permanent organization, and continues to function even when Parliament has been dissolved. Its sessions and its records are confidential.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA BECOMES CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

The general principles of the Czecho-Slovak Government's policy were first stated in Parliament by Prime Minister Beran on December 13. He said :

To-day it is certain that neither in programme nor in method can we continue the policy which we followed until September of this year. Our international relations are now determined by the new geographical situation of the State, and by the new Power relations in Europe. Our internal order has also changed. Relations between the Czech provinces and Slovakia and Ruthenia are settled on a new basis. The national ideals of the Slovaks and the Ruthenes which these peoples have striven for in the past are completely fulfilled. . . .

The previous political parties actually ceased to exist before they were formally dissolved. Nowhere is there a return to the past, either in programme, in methods, or in tactics. Any attempt at a return would be bitterly rejected by the nation. We realize that no new political splitting up of our peoples can be allowed, and that no political movement can be permitted which is not rooted in our own soil. The national parties will not usurp power in their own State, but they will be its devoted servants.

On the subject of foreign relations M. Beran said :

Our foreign policy is new in its aims, its means, and its content. In the stormy events of this year, not only our frontiers were affected, but also numerous elements in the policies of the Great Powers were shattered—elements which we had hitherto regarded as unalterable.

We are not blind and deaf to these changes. We shall not chase after shadows, but base our foreign policy on facts, on the economic and social circumstances. We shall adapt ourselves to what is unconditionally necessary without renouncing our inalienable rights and the preservation of our State and national interests.

Free from the duty of regarding the past, the Government will pursue one clear aim : to preserve the State and to keep the peace for its peoples. We shall respect all States and nations, but in the first place our own interests, being clearly conscious of our actual international position.

Our first care will be the settlement of our friendly relations with our great neighbour, Germany. A series of questions in this relationship which are most important for us are awaiting solution. We confidently believe that direct contact

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

between the statesmen of both countries will simplify and accelerate the solution. The President of the Republic, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and myself have already clearly and sincerely indicated how we conceive our relations with the German state and people, and how we wish to settle and consolidate them. We are determined always to speak in a frank and manly fashion. We do not conceal the fact that to begin with we have to overcome what naturally still remains of the psychological effects of our severe territorial and national losses. This is a matter which affects both sides. We believe that the German people, and its Leader, will well understand the spiritual state of our people after the storm which has swept over it.

We wish also to establish good-neighbourly relations with Poland and Hungary. The course of the negotiations with these states in the last few days justifies us in the belief that the same will animate Warsaw and Budapest. . . . We are gratified that our relations with Italy have shaped in accordance with the wishes of our people, and with our mutual traditions. Rome has as good an understanding of our present situation as in the days of the crisis, and her voice will always be followed attentively by us.

In the reconstruction of our country in our own way, and in accordance with our needs, we are not, and we shall not be, adherents of isolation or restriction to our geographical area. We shall, therefore, develop and maintain our relations with other states—above all, with France, Great Britain, and the United States of America.

(a) **The Czechs.**—With the division of the Czecho-Slovak Republic into three autonomous sections, political life among the Czechs, Slovaks, and Ruthenians—or Ukrainians as they are now more correctly called—reflects the different national characteristics and interests of the three Slavonic peoples of Czecho-Slovakia more closely than before. The effort of the first Republic to break down regional differences, to produce by gradual assimilation citizens who were first of all Czecho-Slovaks, and, in the second place, Czech, Slovak, or Ukrainian—as the inhabitants of Great Britain have a *British* nationality overriding the differences of English, Scots, or Welsh—has to some extent been reversed. There is now a tendency, inevitable in the circumstances, to emphasize local peculiarities. This tendency is naturally

CZECHOSLOVAKIA BECOMES CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

more marked among the two smaller branches of the nation than among the Czechs, who have strongly rooted international, collectivist sentiments.

As Rudolf Beran, the Prime Minister, said to Parliament, the public as a whole desired to make a clean break with the past. It was felt that the old party system, which made coalition governments unavoidable, had failed badly when put to the test. Theoretically, the system of proportional representation in the election of members of Parliament, in the representation of the various parties in the Cabinet, in the various Parliamentary and political committees, provided a perfect form of democratic government. The great weaknesses of the system, however, were the slowness with which it moved and the opportunities it provided for private and sectional interests to sabotage measures which were of benefit to the whole country. It was a weakness too that the various ministries became the preserves of the different political parties, with the result, for instance, that the Foreign Office, predominantly Social Democrat, was often in conflict with the Prime Minister's Office, always Agrarian.

There was then, after Munich, a strong movement to sweep away the previous *régime*, and to find a system which would be simpler, quicker in action, and less open to abuse. Among the Czechs many people's minds turned to the idea of something like the English or American two-party system. After some preliminary haggling among half a dozen parties political life in the Czech provinces stabilized itself in two parties—the National Unity Party, which formed the Government, and the National Labour Party, which constitutes the Opposition.

The first announcement of the National Unity Party was made on November 18. Six of the then existing parties dissolved themselves and united to form the new Governmental party. These were the Agrarians (led by Beran, the Prime Minister), the Czecho-Slovak National Socialists (one-time Beneš party), the Small Traders Party, the Czech Clerical Party, the National Union, and the National League (a small, quasi-Fascist group). Members of all

these parties automatically became members of the National Unity Party. In the smaller Parliament which has resulted from the loss of many constituencies in the ceded areas the National Unity Party has 111 deputies out of a total of 203, and 54 senators out of 102.

The Opposition, the National Labour Party, consists almost entirely of the former Czech Social Democrats. The foundation congress took place on December 12. Soon after Munich the Social Democrats had left the Labour and Socialist International, and at the foundation congress M. Hampl, former Social Democrat leader, said the National Labour Party rejected the idea of the class struggle, and would permit no revolutionary elements within its ranks. At the same time he declared that the Czechs would with difficulty accept any Government other than a democratic one. A report on the future mission of the National Labour Party, presented to the Congress, said that the Party would defend democracy and the two-party system. The party's opposition would not be destructive. The party was Socialist, but it had no objections to the present system on questions of principle, only on the carrying out of otherwise sound ideas.

The National Labour Party is represented in Parliament by 38 deputies, presided over by M. Nečas, former Minister of Social Welfare, and by 19 senators.

The Prime Minister in a statement to the Press welcomed the formation of an Opposition, and said that the two-party system must be regarded as final. The formation of new parties would not be allowed. (The Communist Party had already been proscribed.)

It looked at first as though the National Labour Party was destined to a brief life only, to find extinction within the ranks of one all-embracing State party. But inside a month after the National Labour Party's foundation it became clear that the mass of the people were much more sympathetic to the Opposition than to the National Unity Party of the Government. Theoretically the National Unity had taken over all the members of the six parties amalgamated in it. In practice it was found that the

National Unity had, indeed, got the membership cards, but not by any means all the members. There were large numbers of resignations. Simultaneously applications for membership of the Opposition party exceeded the expectation of the party's leaders. In Prague and other towns the National Labour Party now has more members than the Government party. The National Labour Party has been joined by members of the former Czech National Socialists and Clericals, and also by former members of the now forbidden Communist party. The Government side is thus left with the support of the Agrarians and other conservative groups, which in the past had, in any case, usually acted together. At the time of writing—February 1939—many well-informed people think that if an election were held now the majority of votes would go to the Opposition and not to the Government. Such an event would, however, be an embarrassment, not only to the present *régime*, but also to the Opposition itself, which has no wish to be granted power at the present time. There are several reasons why this is so. In the first place, any Government in Czecho-Slovakia now has to pursue a policy acceptable to Germany, even though it may, as the present one does, put up the utmost possible resistance. Beran became Prime Minister, not only because of his position in Czech politics, but also because he was a prominent advocate of reconciliation and closer co-operation with Germany. Similarly Dr Hácha, the President, and Dr Chvalkovský, the Foreign Minister, were men known to have no anti-German feeling. Prominent Czechs who are looked on with disfavour by Berlin can hardly become Ministers at the present time. It follows that the former Social Democrats who now lead the National Labour Party would almost certainly be rejected by the Nazis. Despite formal renunciation of the class-struggle—which, in any event, had never played a big part in Czech Social Democracy—these men have, from the Nazi viewpoint, the taint of Marxism about them. Another reason why the National Labour Party does not wish to take office at the present time is that this party was formed with the idea that it should remain in the background as a reserve of

men who could take over in the event of a crisis forcing out the present Government. It was found last September that a grave disadvantage of the coalition form of Government was the absence of any alternative. All parties were in the Government, and when the Government fell it left a vacuum which could only be filled by officials and soldiers. Now the present Beran Government is not, perhaps, widely popular, but, none the less, one cannot foresee any purely internal trouble which would drive it out. The only sort of crisis which might make a new Government necessary is one of European, international dimensions. It need not be stressed that the only crisis of that kind which would be welcomed by the Czechs is one that would free them from subjugation to Germany. Should such a crisis occur, should Germany be seriously weakened by war or other causes, the Czech people would certainly no longer see the necessity for the continuance in power of a Government identified in the popular view with the hated Germans. Under these conditions the Beran, or any similar, Government would certainly have to resign. And under these conditions the National Labour Party would gladly take office. This party has at present considerable popularity, but it would lose that popularity if it took office now and carried out the pro-German policy, as it would be obliged to do.

Prime Minister Beran and his Government could easily have banned the National Labour Party and instituted a totalitarian one-party system. The Prime Minister did not do so because, whatever his feelings towards an Opposition, he is, above all, a Czech, and he realized the value of having an alternative Government at hand should the opportunity ever come to use it. For this reason he, and his party's organ, *Venkov*, openly welcomed the formation of the National Labour Party. It is conceivable that Germany might demand the suppression of the Opposition. In that case its leaders and members would doubtless join the National Unity Party, and remain ready to resume their old grouping at the first opportunity. If an election were held under a one-party system it would not be surprising

to see the name of M. Nečas, former Social Democrat, on the same list as M. Beran, former Agrarian, despite the fact that such an alliance was entirely unthinkable a year ago.

The internal changes necessitated by the German triumph are nearly all unpopular among the people, even when the inescapable nature of these changes is recognized, but probably nothing is so resented as the rigorous censorship which is now exercised over the Czech Press. Because the Press of Czecho-Slovakia was, before Munich, the only free and outspoken Press in Europe east of the Rhine something deserves to be said on this topic.

In the first place, many former excellent journals have disappeared. With the banning of the Communist Party went naturally the suppression of its newspapers, chief of which were the *Rote Fahne*, published in German, and the Czech *Rudé Právo*. Almost all the German language newspapers have ceased publication, including the famous *Prager Presse*, founded by Masaryk, which was the semi-official organ of the Czecho-Slovak Foreign Office, and for twenty years probably the leading journal of liberal, democratic opinion in Central and South-eastern Europe. *Bohemia*, oldest German-language newspaper of the Czechs, and *Der Sozialdemokrat*, organ of the German Social Democrats in Czecho-Slovakia, have also gone. One of the soundest organs of Czech public opinion, the *Národní Osvobození*, journal of the Czecho-Slovak Legionaries Association, was closed down as the result of having expressed sentiments displeasing to Germany.

All the newspapers which remain are subject to a strict preventative censorship. The censor sits in the newspaper office and goes through the paper before it is printed. Some of the rules laid down for editors border on the ridiculous. For example, it is not permissible to refer to the story of Red Riding Hood, because the Germans might think the wolf in the story was intended as an allusion to them! A popular Czech song, of which the sentiment is, roughly, "If winter comes can spring be far behind," may not be quoted, because it suggests that the country is now in a bad way. The Jewish question is a ticklish one for editors,

how can the French and British criticize, since their Governments made such German interference possible?

(b) **The Slovaks.**—The Slovaks, who number but 2,250,000 as compared with the 6,500,000 Czechs of the Republic, are psychologically dominated by the desire to be regarded as a people distinct from the Czechs, and as an independent, if related, nation.

Very important, as the basis of nationality, is the Slovak language, which its speakers insist is not by any means merely a dialect or variant of Czech. It is, they say, a complete, self-contained tongue. To the foreigner, little versed in the subtleties of Slavonic linguistics, Czech and Slovak seem almost exactly the same. I am told, though, that the Slovaks use many archaic expressions and turns of phrase which the Czechs find comic. This is said to be one of the causes of the psychological friction which undoubtedly exists between the two so closely related peoples—the Slovaks do not like being laughed at for their way of speech. In practice, it seems that the difference between the spoken languages of Slovakia and Bohemia is not more than that between southern English and the speech of the remoter hamlets of Scotland, or perhaps between Elizabethan English and that of the present day. However, the Slovaks like to make the most of this difference, and since intensive nationalism became the order of the day in Slovakia many Slovak politicians, it is said, have had to get out their schoolday grammars again—in order to make sure that they speak and write nothing but the purest Slovak, untainted by any trace of Czech!

Pious Catholics, still bearing traces of the many centuries of subjugation under the Hungarians, the Slovaks are an emotional, impulsive people, with a talent for singing, dancing, and wearing picturesque costumes, but of limited capacity in handling the political and economic problems of the modern world. This is naturally no fault of theirs. With little opportunity for political self-expression under Hungary, the Slovaks have had only twenty years under the Republic in which to make up for centuries of lost time. In these two decades the progress made in their political

education has been remarkable. Now that they bear the main responsibility for the administration of their own territory practical experience will doubtless soon bring them to political maturity.

The first Slovak Government was formed on October 7 as the result of negotiations between Prague and leading Slovak politicians. Dr Josef Tiso, a Roman Catholic priest, and acting Chairman of the Slovak People's Party of the late Mgr. Andrej Hlinka, became Premier, which office he still holds. Prior to Dr Tiso's appointment a far-reaching reorganization of political parties in Slovakia had taken place. A so-called 'Slovak Front,' which later became the Slovak Unity Party—and the only political party in Slovakia—was formed out of the Slovak People's Party, the Slovak section of the Agrarian Party, and the Slovak Nationalist Party. This 'Slovak Front' was also supported by Slovak members of the Czecho-Slovak National Socialist and Small Traders Parties. Leaders of the above five parties in Slovakia issued a declaration stating that they associated themselves with the Slovak People's Party's demand for autonomy as it had been set out in the proposal of June 5, 1938. This five-party declaration said :

We pledge ourselves to use all our powers for the purpose of ensuring that this proposal is constitutionally accepted by the National Assembly by, at the latest, October 28 . . . The proposal should be accepted in order that Governmental and executive powers . . . shall not merely in fact, but also in law, be transferred into the hands of the Slovaks.

Since there was no doubt that a majority of parties in Slovakia were supporting the demand for autonomy the Prague Government, whatever its misgivings, could not refuse to accept Dr Tiso, the leading man in the autonomist movement, as Premier of Slovakia, nor deny him the right to form a Government, subsequently recognized in the Autonomy Act as having been the legal Government of Slovakia from October 7.

What was to be expected in the way of policy from the Slovaks was quickly made clear. A proclamation issued on October 8 said :

CZECHOSLOVAKIA BECOMES CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

The Slovak Government will always be inspired by the spirit of the late Andrej Hlinka. . . . It will be the representative of the national Slovak idea, of the building up of a national and Christian Slovakia. No mark of anarchy and disruption must bring dishonour to the Slovak cause. Discipline and order must be guaranteed. . . . We shall proceed in the spirit of our motto, *For God and the Nation*, in a Christian and national spirit.

More concretely, Dr Tiso explained in a speech on October 23 :

Our future life will be based not on political parties, but on active, working *Estates*. The political parties are played out. . . . The leader of the nation must not be Marx or Lenin. It must be Christ. . . . We will not set men one against the other, but educate them to unity and understanding. Our social policy will be based on the principle that the welfare of each individual member of each class depends upon work—upon work for all. No one will be able to share in the nation's wealth without deserving it, and without working. At the same time, we shall not permit senseless agitation against capital. . . . We proclaim a Christian attitude. . . . Whoever wants to live in Slovakia must serve the nation in a Christian spirit.

One of the first acts of the Slovak Government was to ban the Communists in Slovakia. The banning of the Social Democrats followed shortly after. As had been foreshadowed in the formation of a 'Slovak Front,' all remaining parties in the province were amalgamated into one, and this Slovak Unity Party was the only candidate at the election to the Provincial Diet on December 18. As is the way with such elections, the party obtained 98 per cent. of all votes cast. The Diet thus elected consists of 63 deputies.

The first Slovak Diet was opened on January 18, after a Mass for Roman Catholic members, a Church service for Evangelicals, and a parade of the Hlinka Guards—the Slovak Storm Troops. Dr Martin Sokol, President of the Diet, declared : "The period of the Slovaks' struggle for freedom is ended. Now begins the period of national

rebirth. . . . Hlinka alive was our leader. Hlinka dead is our programme."

Other speeches indicated that now that the Slovaks had their autonomy they would never feel animosity towards the Czechs again, that both peoples must collaborate in rebuilding the state, and that a difficult task still faced Slovakia.

These statements were no more than was necessary, since Czech Ministers were present, and the Slovaks, without Czech money, would go rapidly bankrupt. The chronic poverty of Slovakia—a land of peasants—is the cardinal fact underlying all the twists and turns of Slovak politics. The leaders of autonomous Slovakia are to be observed dashing hither and thither—to Germany, Hungary, Poland, even to Prague—but the motive behind all this activity is much less political than economic. Capital is what Slovakia needs above all else.

Slovakia has imitated Nazi Germany by the introduction of a one-party system and of a Storm Troop organization, but it would be incorrect to regard Slovakia as inevitably nothing but a puppet of Germany. Politically immature, the Slovaks naturally take their ideas from the state which commands most respect in Central and South-eastern Europe. They are equally ready to accept any economic help that may come from the Third Reich—though so far there has been few signs of this. Subsidies to a few individuals or organizations keep the political atmosphere friendly to Germany, but will do nothing to solve Slovakia's economic problems. The anti-Czech turbulence of the first few weeks after Munich has now largely died down. Anti-Czech feeling—which it is naturally Germany's interest to promote—has a certain real basis in that Slovaks want the official and other jobs in Slovakia hitherto held by Czechs. Twenty years of the Republic have brought forth a new generation of educated Slovaks who feel themselves fully competent to take over the work which had to be entrusted to Czechs at the time of the foundation of the Republic. Once this demand has been satisfied—as it is being—there will be little material ground for Slovak-Czech antagonism. Re-

CZECHOSLOVAKIA BECOMES CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

sponsible Slovak leaders recognize the economic weakness of their country, and have recently made clear that they are particularly anxious for economic collaboration with the Czechs.

Once the relatively minor quarrels between the Czechs and the Slovaks have been got out of the way the very nationalism of the Slovaks is more likely to bring them closer to the Czechs than otherwise. There can be no question now of the Slovaks ever losing their national identity through submergence by the Czechs, whereas this might well happen under the Germans. It came within an ace of happening under the Austro-Hungarian Empire in consequence of the Magyarization process so ruthlessly and so successfully pursued by Budapest. Paradoxical as it may seem, it is precisely those things which the Slovaks have copied from Nazi Germany which are most likely to preserve these people as a national entity. Prominent among the imitations of Nazi-ism is the Hlinka Guard, of which a few words must be said.

This organization, which had existed before Munich, leapt into notoriety at the beginning of November last year through a couple of days of anti-Jewish rioting by some of its members in Bratislava. The upheaval among the Slovaks caused by the territorial cessions to Hungary gave a number of callow youths the opportunity of acquiring a Hlinka Guard armlet and an exaggerated sense of self-importance. For a few days they suffered badly from a rush of authority to the head. At railway stations and the Bratislava airport Hlinka Guards arrogated to themselves the right to stop travellers taking more than arbitrarily limited sums of money out of Slovakia into other parts of the Republic! Cash was confiscated from travellers, and in some cases cheerfully spent at the local tavern. Blaming the Jews for the losses to Hungary, Hlinka Guards pillaged Jewish shops in Bratislava, and for one night got out of hand. Then arose the ironical situation that German Storm Troops came over the frontier from neighbouring Austria to help the regular police suppress the Slovak anti-Semites!

A few days sufficed to bring conditions back to normal, and now the Hlinka Guard is well in the control of the Slovak Government. The badge of the organization is the two-armed cross, the Slovak national emblem, in red on a white ground. The Guard was recently defined by Stefan Hašík, Slovak Government delegate in the Czecho-Slovak Defence Ministry, as a Government organization and as a semi-military formation. To the Hlinka Guard, he said, was confided semi-military education during the period between leaving school and regular military service. Dr Karol Sidor, Slovak Vice-Prime Minister in the Central Government, who is also Supreme Commander of the Hlinka Guard, declared at the opening of a training school for leaders of the organization :

You have to educate the most valuable core of the Slovak nation in Christian and national discipline. You have to educate fighters for God and the nation—fighters who despise death, as also fame and material advantage. May your example be Andrej Hlinka, the uncompromising fighter for our rights. Leaders of the Hlinka Guard must follow the path laid down by him.

It is said that the Guard is financed, at least in part, by Germany. This, however, would hardly seem necessary or likely, since the organization is maintained by the Slovak Government, and has, moreover, taken over all the funds and property of all gymnastic and physical training organizations previously existing in Slovakia, such as the Catholic "Orel" and the Czecho-Slovak "Sokol." It may be presumed too that Germany would not spend money on promoting pure Slovak patriotism and nationalism—to do which is evidently the purpose of the Hlinka Guard.

(c) Carpatho-Ukraine and the Ukrainian Movement.—Carpatho-Ukraine, formerly known as Ruthenia, is the third and smallest of Czecho-Slovakia's three autonomous provinces. With a population of only 552,124 it would be as politically insignificant as it is economically if it were not for one fact—the nationality of the province's inhabitants. These people are Ukrainians. They are members of a race whose total numbers—distributed among the Soviet Union,

CZECHOSLOVAKIA BECOMES CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

Poland, Rumania, and Czecho-Slovakia—are between 40,000,000 and 45,000,000.

The Ukrainian problem as a whole is, according to one British expert, Mr C. A. Macartney, “perhaps the biggest unsolved political question of Europe to-day.” The formation of Carpatho-Ukraine as an autonomous province of Czecho-Slovakia must be regarded as the first step towards the solution of this complicated question of the Great Ukrainian State of the future. It is for this reason that this small, remote, poor, mountainous province of the Czecho-Slovak Republic has leapt into the headlines of the world’s newspapers and become of quite special interest and importance.

To investigate conditions in Carpatho-Ukraine I spent a week in February this year in Chust, the provincial capital, and in Rachov, a typical village of the mountains which make up the greater part of the country.

To begin with, it must be realized that Carpatho-Ukraine is culturally, economically, and politically almost as remote from Prague as it is from Paris or London. Walking among the Carpathian Mountains, or mingling with the peasants and Jews that stand about in the muddy streets of Chust, the Czecho-Slovak capital seems a distant centre of civilization, not particularly nearer than other such centres in Western Europe. When I left Prague it was impossible to make the journey to Chust entirely by train, owing to the disruption of communications caused by the territorial cessions to Hungary. One could go by rail as far as Prešov, in Eastern Slovakia, and from there a bus lurched for seven and a half hours over a road which until recently had seldom carried any more urgent traffic than an occasional creaking wooden cart. Now the train service has to some extent been restored, and it is possible to get to Chust from Prague in about twenty hours, in a train which, *en route*, slips in and out of Germany, Hungary, and Rumania.

Carpatho-Ukraine, like any self-respecting state, has a passport examination at its frontiers. That is to say, the bus came to a stop at a group consisting of three white-washed cottages, a Czech policeman, and an intelligent

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

looking young man in civilians, who demanded passports of the bus's occupants. I was faintly disappointed, though, when the young man merely said, "It doesn't matter," to a girl who had left her passport behind in Prešov. It was true, as she said, that she was still in Czecho-Slovakia, and considered the passport unnecessary. None the less, the incident seemed a reflection on the autonomy of Carpatho-Ukraine, and the girl, I felt, ought not to have been allowed to pass without solemn warning and a special paper made out on the spot.

The arrival of "the Bus" in Chust was one of the day's chief joys to the inhabitants. It was the opportunity for a scrambling and milling around of dozens of children and grubby youths, who fought each other in order to seize upon travellers' luggage, that from its portage they might earn a few pence. More senior persons buttonholed the travellers, and in a babble of Ukrainian, Czech, Magyar, Yiddish, and German offered accommodation in their private houses, which were described as "magnificent," or, at the very least, as "first rate." As "the Bus" arrived after dark the traveller was, unluckily sometimes for himself, unable to judge at once by looking around him of the probability of these epithets. For myself, I had by pure chance the good fortune to appeal for assistance amid the babbling throng to a gentleman who turned out to be no less a personage than—I transcribe from his visiting-card—Dr Volodimir Komarinskyi, Chief of Press and Propaganda in the Government of Carpatho-Ukraine. I do not know whether it is part of this official's duties to meet "the Bus"—it is by no means improbable that this is so—but for me the encounter was a piece of remarkably good luck. Dr Komarinskyi at once dived into what I later discovered was the larger of Chust's two hotels and the very centre of all social and political life in the capital, and secured me rooms.

This beginning was, however, too auspicious. From this moment my luck began to ebb. The hotel, also headquarters of the "Sič," the Ukrainian Storm Troops—of which more later—contained some twenty bedrooms, a large restaurant, used also for public meetings, dances, and

the like, and a smaller dining-room. Considering the mud outside, the interior of the hotel appeared reasonably clean. But details raised grave doubts. The bed linen, for instance. It is possible that my sheets were not those of the last visitor, and that their grubby, grey tint was due, as the manager insisted, to the inefficiency of local laundries. It is possible, but . . . I tried not to think too much on the matter and to comfort myself with the sweet odour of the beech-logs burning in the high, iron stove. Unfortunately there were also the towels, one of which looked as though recently used for polishing black boots. And there was the food. The actual character of the meat and vegetables used in the preparation of the dishes I ate was dimmed and blurred, like an old painting under its varnish, by the grease which submerged everything—a grease in which one seemed to taste the very washing water of those inefficient laundries, the actual essence of the mud in the main street. It was not that I cherished unreasonable expectations, but that even in the muddiest villages of Montenegro and Macedonia I had had fresher linen and more appetizing food than in the capital of Carpatho-Ukraine.

Living at the hotel, in an atmosphere of deference and respect so profound that one involuntarily looked for a thin spiral of incense, were two or three German journalists, one or two officials of the Wilhelmstrasse, and other Nazis of undefined status but undeniable importance. Their table, reserved nightly, was garnished with a swastika flag. The presence with it of the blue and yellow colours of the Ukrainians symbolized the friendship of the two nations. Another table was the meeting-place for members of the U.N.O., the Ukrainian National Union—the only political party allowed in Carpatho-Ukraine—and for officials of the “Sič.” Prominent among the company was Andrej Voron, the General Secretary of the U.N.O., a dark, lank, sultry-looking individual of the dyspeptic appearance which used to be appreciated in London’s Bohemian circles. Voron was clearly an intellectual, but most of his colleagues aspired to a slick, military bearing, and were attired in the “Sič” blue-grey uniform of jacket, knee-breeches, and

jack-boots. They appeared to be in danger of saluting themselves stiff through constant raising of the right arm. "*Slava Ukrainy!*" or sometimes merely "*Slava!*" they said a dozen times an hour, as friends came and went, this greeting being a convenient Slavonic equivalent of the Nazi "*Heil!*"

The hotel looked out on the main street of Chust at a point where it widens into what is almost a square. Partly paved, the road merges into deep gutters, inches deep in mud and slush. The miscellaneous filth in the centre of the road is from time to time the object of spirited if largely vain attacks by old women armed with twig besoms. Outside the hotel, from daybreak to late at night, was invariably to be seen a bunch of gossiping villagers. They were nondescript individuals for the most part, attired in multiple wrappings of shabby leather, sheepskin, and wool. Distinguishable from the mass were the Orthodox Jews, ringleted, bearded, with circular black hats, upon the crowns and brims of which the white dust of ages had indelibly settled. One marvelled that it should be possible to get the *upper* surface of a hat so dirty. These same Jews constitute 12·1 per cent. of the population of Carpatho-Ukraine, but own 95 per cent. of the shops and other businesses. Nothing was more obvious in Chust than this fact. One sought almost in vain for a non-Jewish name on the shop-fronts. The monotonous sequence of Herman Kahan, Fani Davidovitch, Israel Treiber, Samuel Kahan, Herman Rosenfeld, was broken but rarely by a Czech appellation.

Noticeable too among the crowd in Chust's main street were the peasants from the surrounding country; sturdy fellows these, the best of them from the mountains, attired in black cap of curly lambskin, thick homespun woollen jacket and trousers with black pipings, and home-made linen shirt. Sometimes, for extra warmth, a whole fleece was thrown over the shoulders. The peasant women brought a little colour into the general dreariness with their red skirts and coloured kerchiefs, and now and then the face of a young girl would startle with its fine complexion, happiness, and beauty of profile.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA BECOMES CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

Three scenes stand out as illustrative of the remoteness, spiritual no less than geographical, of Chust.

The first might have been an incident in any novel by Dostoevsky or other Russian master of the last century : Along the muddy road on the outskirts of the village stumbled a group of three men. Two were wood-cutters, one having under his arm an axe, the other a saw. Between them they dragged the mud-bespattered, alcohol-sodden, limp figure of a man, whose only desire appeared to be to lie down in the mud. This he accomplished from time to time, but was each time hauled once more to a semi-standing position. "Come along," his friend said encouragingly, "we'll go and drink some beer." (So interpreted a Czech colleague.) "No," yelled the limp one, "I don't want to go home ! You're taking me home ! I won't go !" Once more he plunged into the mud. The group made but slow progress. At last they hailed a passing droshky, as shabby, grimy, and shaky as the drunk himself. With immense effort he was hoisted up and hauled like a sack of potatoes on to the seat of the cab. Immediately he attempted to slither out on the farther side, but one of his companions quickly nipped round and seized his ankles. Whereupon the drunk subsided, and the droshky drove off. A few minutes later we came upon it outside the man's home. The drunk lay inert, his head lolling back over the folded-down hood of the cab, his eyes blinking at the sky. From the house appeared the man's wife. "H'm, there you are," she said curtly. "You're a stupid beast !" She spat in his face, laughed, and went in again. The driver of the cab walked away. Two children followed the woman back into the house, and the man lay there, blinking at the sky, while the cab-horse now and then restlessly pawed the thick snow of the fresh, untrodden lane.

The second impression was of the prospect from the hill crowned by the ruins of Chust castle, relic of a fortress built against the Turks.

It had snowed in the morning, and in the afternoon the sky was still full of clouds, thick as curds, that promised more snow. From the hilltop, then, one looked out over a

scene of loneliness and, as it seemed, of desolation ; over a wide, white and grey snow-covered valley, and farther off the mountains, with forest like a thin beard sprouting from their upper slopes, receding, one smoky dome behind the other, into the far distance of Rumania. To the south the Tisa river gleamed dully in the afternoon sun with the faint silky sheen of zinc. The whole world was a white and grey, smoky, cloudy blending of level field, rotund mountain, and thick, rounded, milky cloud. The air was sharp and fine. There was no sound, but once the clanging of church-bells from the valley, and the rustling of the wind in many birch-trees.

The third impression was of a lane of one-storied, blue-washed cottages. The roofs were thatched, and under the eaves, looped over long poles, hanks of flax hung drying. The little gardens were six inches encrusted with pure, sugary snow. Along the lane, where the snow had been trodden into slush, a small boy or a dog passed from time to time. The cottage chimneys smoked, for it was near the time for the midday meal, and the air was full of the spicy odour of resinous wood burning. Then suddenly the soft stillness of the lane was shaken by a voice from one of the cottages. Within the house could be heard the babble of children's voices, the patter of feet, and the clatter of pots and pans. But above these sounds floated out the high, wailing notes of a Jewish song. Whether it was in Yiddish or Hebrew I have no idea, but there was no mistaking the strange quality of Jewish singing—that trembling, faintly nasalized use of the voice which seems always about to become simple, uncontrolled sobbing. Within the dark, narrow room a woman sang as she prepared the midday meal. Her voice was the voice of Eastern Europe, of Russia, of the Near East, of wherever the old traditional life of the Jews still goes on. There was something in that singing which is outside the experience of the West.

This brief incident and the other two I have described made one understand more than any amount of statistics or political analysis could do how remote is Carpatho-Ukraine from Prague, from Paris or London, and even,

despite the political contacts, from Berlin. In its geography, its mode of life, its traditions, its psychology, Carpatho-Ukraine belongs to Eastern Europe—to Poland, Rumania, Russia.

Against the impressive background of Nature and of ancient ways and traditions the smart tricks of Nazi political propaganda, slavishly imitated by the Ukrainians, seemed of an upstart vulgarity. On the eve of the elections to the Carpatho-Ukrainian Diet, and on February 12, polling-day, all the devices by which Hitler made his way to power were brought out one after the other. A lorry-load of yokels dashed through the villages, stopping now and then to allow the occupants to shout, "Vote for U.N.O. ! *Slava Ukrainy !*" and such like slogans. Loud-speakers installed on a balcony of the "Sič" headquarters amplified to the crowd of villagers standing in the mud below a number of gramophone records of Ukrainian folk-songs, which were interspersed with speeches by Dr Komarinskyi and M. Voron. This latter gentleman laid a curse upon all who did not vote for the U.N.O. They would be traitors, he said, and when they died they would not lie quietly in their graves, for the earth would cast them forth and reject them for ever and ever. It seems that one of the greatest dreads of the superstitious Ukrainian peasant is this, and M. Voron's audience was deeply impressed by his threat. Further to celebrate the first elections in autonomous Carpatho-Ukraine a bonfire was lit on the castle hill, lighted candles were placed in windows on the main street, and a torchlight procession was arranged. Alas, a snowfall made torches impossible, and a thousand young men with nearly a score of village maidens tramped unspectacularly through the wet snow and mud in the gloom of Chust's dimly lit streets. All this celebration took place, it may be noted, before the polling. There was no reason why it should not. The result was, in any case, a foregone conclusion. As in Slovakia, only one list of candidates—that of the U.N.O.—was presented to the electors, and they could do nothing but vote for or against the list. I watched the polling at one station in Chust, and, within the limits of this so-called election, it

was fairly enough conducted. Electors filed into a room, had their names checked in a register, were handed the printed list of candidates and an envelope. The voter then went behind a curtain, and either put the list in the envelope before sealing it or left it empty. An empty envelope counted as a vote against the list. The sealed envelope was dropped into a large wooden box. There was no attempt at intimidation of electors by the presence of uniformed "Sič" men—chiefly because such intimidation was not necessary. These simple-minded peasants regard voting in much the same way as they regard the payment of taxes or the registration of their children. They are anxious to do what the educated gentlemen tell them, and to avoid any trouble. They will vote for anyone who orders them firmly enough. The same people who this year gave a 95 per cent. majority to a nationalist, imitation-Nazi Ukrainian party at the last election gave a majority to the Communists. To the mass of the people Ukrainian nationalism, at the moment, probably means as little as did Communism. But, despite this, the Ukrainian nationalist movement, the drive for the union of the Ukrainians of Poland, Rumania, and Czecho-Slovakia into one state, and eventually the union of this state with Soviet Ukraine, is important. The creation of Carpatho-Ukraine, the establishment there of an indisputably Ukrainian Government and Diet, however small these may be, have given a tremendous impetus to the long-cherished desire of all the politically-minded, educated Ukrainians of Eastern Europe for an independent Ukrainian State of their own.

Many refugee Ukrainians from Poland, Rumania, where they are rigorously suppressed, and even from Soviet Russia are now in Chust. They are being given jobs in the Carpatho-Ukrainian Government, in the U.N.O., on the party's newspaper *Nova Svoboda* (*New Freedom*), and, above all, in the "Sič." Many of these refugees have first been given some military and political training in Germany, and a certain amount of German money, it is understood in Chust, helps to finance the "Sič." According to Julian Revay, one of the three Ministers of the Carpatho-Ukrainian

CZECHOSLOVAKIA BECOMES CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

Government, the "Sič" has 15,000 members. An editor of *Dilo*, the official organ of the U.N.D.O., the chief Ukrainian party in Poland, told me the "Sič" had 10,000 members. In any case, but few are so far provided with uniforms or have done more than attend a few lectures, march through the streets, and cheer at meetings. None the less, an official of the Carpatho-Ukraine Ministry of Education told me, "We are drilling and training the 'Sič' on military lines, in order that they may take over the defence of the country when the Czechs go." This, however, he did not expect to happen for a year or two at least. The same official added, "We already feel quite independent of Prague. It is true we have the President and the Ministers of Defence, Finance, and Foreign Affairs in common with the Central Government, but that is only temporary. In a few years we shall establish a completely independent Ukrainian State. To do that we are ready to take help from anyone, but only Germany seems prepared to help us. We know that we must pay for this help, and we shall pay, but only so long as is absolutely necessary."

The official said further, "Of course France will have to be settled first by Italy and Germany, and then there is the colonial question. Only when these things are out of the way will Germany take decisive action in Eastern Europe."

All Ukrainians rightly emphasize that a lot of preparatory work is necessary yet before even the Ukrainians of Poland or Rumania can be united with those of Czecho-Slovakia. The detaching of the Ukrainians of the U.S.S.R. is an even more distant affair. But every one in Chust is convinced that, one way or another, with or without war, the Great Ukraine will be established.

One well-informed Ukrainian journalist from Poland said to me quite frankly, "We don't need a war. All we need is plenty of radio propaganda, an irredentist campaign such as the world has never yet seen. Then arms-smuggling, a little help from Germany, and the Ukrainians everywhere will do the job themselves. . . . Next year we may be sitting in Czernowitz [Rumania] as we are here now."

Asked if he thought the U.S.S.R. would give up the

Soviet Ukraine without fighting, the same man said, "We reckon that there is bound to be an internal collapse in the Soviet Union before long. The army is not in a position to fight. Its aeroplanes and guns and tanks are excellent, but the men are no good. They are demoralized. Besides, the Ukrainians in the Soviet Union are dissatisfied. Moscow will not be able to suppress 40,000,000 people now that this movement has really started."

He concluded by saying, as all Ukrainians do, "We know we shall have to pay for Germany's help, but rather than have no help at all we are prepared to pay."

The question of just how much assistance Germany is giving, or how big her influence is in Carpatho-Ukraine, is difficult to answer. Certainly the moral and psychological influence of Germany outweighs all others. The imitation of Nazi methods, whether coming spontaneously from the Ukrainians or as the result of instruction, is none the less a fact. I noticed too that at the dinner-table gatherings in the "Sič" headquarters the local Ukrainian leaders showed great deference to the Nazis, and that during the election week-end there was much anxiety to put up a good show for the benefit of the German visitors, chief among whom was the German Consul who has now been appointed in Chust.

In many small but significant ways the German influence makes itself felt. Only German visitors are really welcomed by the authorities. Almost any non-German foreigner is regarded with suspicion in Chust. It seems to be assumed that he is necessarily hostile, and that, whatever his ostensible occupation or business, he is almost certainly a secret agent. One British resident in Chust, a writer, told me that he was summoned to the police-station one morning to answer an entirely trumped-up charge of having "consorted with a Polish agent" during a visit to another part of the country the previous day. Then, again, it is almost impossible for a foreigner to interview a Ukrainian Minister or higher official without a German being present at the meeting. Most striking of all, one journalist who asked Minister Revay for certain information was told that the

CZECHOSLOVAKIA BECOMES CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

best person he could see was the representative of the *Völkischer Beobachter*. This same Nazi journalist complained bitterly to a friend of mine about the British, American, and Scandinavian correspondents who came to Chust, because, he said, "they did not have the decency to introduce themselves." Why they should be under any obligation to do so was not made clear—unless the reason was that in German eyes to go to Carpatho-Ukraine was, in effect, to go to Germany. In these ways the influence of Berlin makes itself felt in Chust, but there has not so far been any large-scale financial or economic backing from Germany. And the chief problem of Carpatho-Ukraine, as of Slovakia, is one of money.

The budget of the Chust Government for the coming year shows a deficit of nearly £2,000,000. This, it may be assumed, will be covered by Prague. If the Czechs were to cut off supplies, possibly Germany would do something to help—if she can afford to. But Minister Julian Revay has been heard to complain that the Germans have done very little so far to assist their Ukrainian friends. Last autumn several German geologists visited Carpatho-Ukraine to estimate its mineral potentialities, and while I was in Chust a German forestry commission arrived to examine the timber supplies and report on their suitability for Germany's needs. Timber is, at present, the province's chief source of wealth. But the remoteness of the country, its poor means of transport, add heavily to the cost. In order to meet this problem the Chust Government is planning to increase the number of sawmills on the spot, so that the logs can be at least partially worked up within the country. Another plan on which some thought has been spent is to develop a cellulose industry. The other raw materials which the Carpatho-Ukrainian Government hopes to see exploited are the local salt deposits, which might become the basis of a chemical industry, the iron ore at Dovhé, which is reported to contain 45 per cent. of iron, and the brown coal at Imstičov. There is also said to be oil at Jasiňa, near the Polish frontier. But if it exists it lies very deep—in the opinion of experts, at a depth of between

4500 and 5000 feet. All these possibilities can only become realities after considerable capital expenditure. The Chust Government have indicated that they are prepared to give favourable conditions to Czech capital, and they also intend to seek financial help, possibly in the form of a loan, from the Ukrainian colonies in the U.S.A. Offers of a loan from Jewish foreign organizations, said Minister Revay recently, had been rejected because the conditions demanded were too difficult. The economic position of Carpatho-Ukraine was summed up by the *Prager Tagblatt* on February 18, 1939, as follows :

It lies with the representatives of Czech and foreign capital to examine closely all economic possibilities, and to provide the means for creating the necessary conditions of economic development. Such capital must, of course, reckon that it will first be necessary to spend large sums on the construction of roads, without which a sound development is impossible. The Government, it is unanimously declared, will do all in its power to further such efforts in every direction.

The chief conclusion I reached after my visit to Carpatho-Ukraine is that the movement for the creation of an independent Great Ukraine must be taken seriously. It is, I think, a vital movement—one which has captured the imagination of the younger generation of Ukrainians, and one for which they are prepared to work tremendously hard. In Chust politics—and that means Ukrainian nationalist politics—is not merely a subject of academic discussion : it is the breath of life. It is job, recreation, excitement, passion, all in one. It absorbs a man's whole energies. The handful of mostly young men, by profession lawyers, school-teachers, officials, journalists, and so on, who are running Carpatho-Ukraine realize that they are participating in an act of creation—that they are making history. To their more experienced fellow-nationals in Poland the establishment of Carpatho-Ukraine has brought new hope, given them a place of refuge from the unwelcome attentions of the Polish authorities, and a base, however small and inconvenient, from which to develop their propaganda and agitation. The educated Ukrainians I have met are tough,

vigorous men who have acquired much of the Prussian—and Nazi—bustle and drive. They have learned a great deal from Germany, but what they have learned will, in the first place, be used in the service of their own national aims. If a Ukrainian State uniting all the forty-odd million Ukrainians of Eastern Europe is ever formed it is doubtful whether it would for long remain under German domination. At the beginning, possibly, but not many years would pass before such a state would revolt against German lordship, as a section of it is now doing against Polish. A state stretching from Central Europe to the Caucasus, with a west to east axis of at least a thousand miles, would be too much even for the Third Reich to keep in subjection.

These considerations are no doubt fully appreciated in Germany, and they may explain why the Nazis are proceeding much more cautiously with the *Drang nach Osten* than was expected last September. A dangerous day for Britain and France will come should the Nazis decide that the dream of colonizing the Ukraine, of making it a German dominion, is a dream that can never be made a reality.

(ii) THE NEW MEN

We have seen how after Munich public anger and bitterness demanded a break with the past. New methods were wanted, and new men. There were many undeserved attacks on prominent leaders, and, above all, on President Beneš, who was made to bear the responsibility and the blame for everything. Dr Beneš had always had enemies—as had President Masaryk before him—among the more hide-bound circles of the *bourgeoisie*, who disliked his liberalism, and his international outlook. After Munich these people came out into the open, and there was a lot of clamour about searching out those who were “guilty” of the national disaster, about “settling accounts” with the old *régime*, and so forth. In order to quieten this controversy and to simplify the relations of the new Czecho-Slovakia with Germany, Dr Beneš resigned from the Presidency on October 5, and promised to leave the country as soon as his

private affairs had been put in order, which he did on October 22. The election of a new President was one of the most urgent constitutional tasks which faced the new Republic.

(a) **President Emil Hácha.** On November 30, a cold, cheerless day, I watched the Czecho-Slovak Parliament elect as President of the Republic a quiet, elderly judge who was almost unknown to the mass of his countrymen. President Emil Hácha is sixty-six. He is a tired man, little desirous of playing a prominent part in his country's affairs, and clearly chosen merely as a figurehead, to whom no one, not even the Germans, could object. Many Czechs say that in appearance Dr Hácha resembles their idea of an Englishman. Especially in his ermine robes of office, they say, he typifies the Czech idea of an English Lord Chief Justice. There is some truth in the comparison. Dr Hácha has, in any case, the heavy, thought-lined face of many men who have spent their lives in the courts. He has a fine head, deep-set eyes under bushy eyebrows, a heavy, pouting mouth and chin.

Dr Hácha comes of an old family of free peasant farmers of South Bohemia, where he was born at the little town of Trhové Sviny on July 12, 1872. His father was a revenue officer, and his grandfather a farmer who was elected to the Bohemian Diet of 1848. His mother was of German origin. Speaking of his childhood in an interview with *Venkov*, Dr Hácha said :

At that time there was no irritation between the different nations. People were judged according to their value as human beings. I used to speak Czech with my grandfather, but I remember my mother often saying, "For Heaven's sake, boys, won't you ever get to learn German!" So we agreed to talk German at home, in order to learn some. And we kept it up—at any rate, for half a day. . . .

Emil Hácha went to the grammar school at Budějovice, and then to Prague University, where he took his LL.D. in 1896. Three years in an advocate's office was the prelude to joining the Service of the National Council of

CZECHOSLOVAKIA BECOMES CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

Bohemia, where he remained till 1916, concerned almost solely with problems of administrative law. His next appointment was a judgeship at the Administrative Court of Vienna, a high distinction at that time, and he was for a while a member of the Imperial Privy Council. On the establishment of the Czecho-Slovak Republic in 1918 Dr Hácha became senior judge of the newly established Administrative Court in Prague, and in 1925 he became Chief Justice of the Supreme Administrative Court—which office he continued to hold until his election to the Presidency of the Republic.

Dr Hácha is known internationally as a member of the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague, and is the author of numerous legal treatises and articles in learned periodicals. One of his books deals with English administrative law, and was the outcome of a visit to England in 1903. The President speaks English well, and has translated Kipling's *Jungle Book* into Czech. German he naturally speaks as well as a citizen of the Reich. He has several friends among legal colleagues in Germany, and since 1935 has been repeatedly invited to meetings of the German Academy of Law, which is presided over by the German Minister of Justice.

In his private life Dr Hácha is interested in art and music. He is one of the directors of the Modern Gallery in Prague, and as secretary to the directors from 1906-19 was largely responsible for the housing and cataloguing of the collection.

Dr Hácha's wife, whom he married in 1902, was an opera singer, until a throat operation made it impossible for her to continue in her profession. She died in the early part of 1938. The President has one daughter.

Dr Hácha lives quietly, what spare time he has being spent chiefly with his books. He smokes little, and does not drink. His cook says that when she asks what he would like for dinner he invariably answers, "Just do whatever is usual in families!" He is a devout Catholic—a fact which made him particularly acceptable as President to the Slovaks, and it was noticed that almost his first act

after his election was to attend Mass at St Vitus's Cathedral.

(b) **Prime Minister Rudolf Beran.** Short, stocky, nearly bald, with a rotund, slightly comical face, Rudolf Beran, the fifty-one-year-old Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia is a peasant, deeply imbued with all the shrewdness and wiliness of generations of peasant ancestors. His family, it is said, can be traced back to 1660. Like the President, he comes from South Bohemia. He was born at Pracejovice on December 28, 1887. His father was a farmer who owned also a village inn and a butcher's shop. His mother came likewise of a South Bohemian peasant family.

Beran's education took place chiefly at the agricultural college in Strakonice, where he obtained his diploma in 1905. A model student, his prizes included a beehive, a calf, and a bound volume of a Czech economic journal. Outside school hours his chief occupation was reading the newspapers.

At the early age of nineteen, a year after leaving the agricultural school, Beran got a job in the secretariat of the Czech Agrarian Party, and in 1907 was given the task of organizing the Agrarian youth movement. Working in close contact with Antonín Švehla, the Agrarian leader and later Prime Minister of the Republic, Beran spent the years until the outbreak of the Great War among the farmers and peasants of Bohemia, listening to their difficulties, making speeches, writing in the newspapers, and all the time organizing the men of the land in what became the leading Czech party.

During the War Beran was noted by the Austrian authorities as "politically dangerous." He was twice called up for service, but each time managed to get back into civil life again. Ostensibly busy through most of the War with the "Česke Srdce," a charitable organization, Beran was actually taking part in the underground preparations for the revolution and declaration of Czech independence. He was a deputy in the first Parliament of the Republic, and has remained one ever since. When Švehla died in

CZECHOSLOVAKIA BECOMES CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

1933 Beran took over the leadership of the Agrarians. From 1934 he was Chairman of the Parliamentary Economy and Control Committee, which, as above related, was made into a permanent institution at the end of 1938. Many people have wondered why Beran did not earlier obtain ministerial office, but, in view of his character, it was not really surprising that he should have preferred to remain the power behind the scenes, the party boss *par excellence*.

Beran's eulogists say of him that he is a first-class tactician and owes his successes to his talent for diplomatic manoeuvring. His enemies say much the same thing in different words. They allege that he is an adept at sharp practices, a calculating schemer. Similarly, while Beran's friends praise his personal charm, his readiness to listen to any point of view, his ready sympathy, his opponents say, "Yes, Beran will agree with you to your face and attack you behind your back."

Politically Beran is, above all, a conservative. In January 1938 he was attacked by the left-wing parties for his suggestion that perhaps the Republic had been too trusting in regard to its allies and friends, and that what was wanted was closer relations with the Sudeten Germans and with Germany. He now has to carry out the policy he then advocated, but, alas, under conditions which must be painful to any patriotic Czech, however conservative, and however ready for co-operation with the Third Reich.

(c) **Foreign Minister František Chvalkovský.** A diplomat with experience of the three capitals of the anti-Comintern triangle—Berlin, Rome, Tokyo—an Agrarian, and former private secretary to Švehla, Dr František Chvalkovský seemed to be the ideal Foreign Minister for a Czecho-Slovakia which was seeking friendship with Germany. It is doubtful, though, whether he accepted the job with enthusiasm, since it was clear that the Czecho-Slovak Foreign Minister would have little to do but carry out the orders given in Berlin. By February 1939 Dr Chvalkovský was known to be weary of his post and anxious for a change. He was always highly-strung, nervous, and his duties since

he took over at the Černin Palace on October 5 have not improved his health. He would like to go as Minister to London, and it is not improbable that he will succeed M. Jan Masaryk there before long.

Dr Chvalkovský was born at Jilové, Bohemia, on July 30, 1885. He studied law in Prague, London, and Berlin, and practised as a lawyer from 1911 to 1913 in Prague, at Cracow and Bolzano. When war broke out he was in charge of the legal department of the Cracow branch of the Živnostenská Bank. He fought in the War till 1916, became head of the political section of the Foreign Office in 1920, led the Czecho-Slovak delegation at the Rome Conference of the Succession States, and in 1921 went to Tokyo as Minister. From there he moved to Washington, then had a two years' interval in the Chamber of Deputies, and returned to the Diplomatic Service in 1927, when he went to Berlin. He had been in Rome since 1932.

(d) **Mgr. Josef Tiso, Premier of Slovakia.** Under Hungarian rule almost the only educated men among the subject Slavs were the priests, and therefore it is not surprising that both the Slovak and Ukrainian Premiers bear the title of Monsignor. Mgr. Dr Josef Tiso, Premier and Minister of the Interior of Slovakia, was born in that country, at Velká Bytča, on October 13, 1887. He studied for the Church in Vienna, where he was consecrated priest in 1910. He was appointed to a post at the Catholic seminary at Nitra, Slovakia, in 1915, and became Professor of Theology there in 1918. At the same time he edited the newspaper *Nitra*. At the time of the revolution Dr Tiso founded the Slovak National Council, and after the 1925 elections he became a leading member of the Slovak People's Party in the Chamber of Deputies. From January 1927 to October 1929 he was Minister of Health. He had always played a prominent part in the Slovak autonomist movement, and was for years deputy leader of his party. Even after his group left the Government Coalition he did not give up the line of constructive collaboration which he had always represented. In 1935 he was much in the public eye as representative of the late Father Hlinka in the negotiations

CZECHOSLOVAKIA BECOMES CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

with Dr Hodža for the re-entry of the Slovak autonomists into the Government.

Following the death of Father Hlinka in August 1938, Dr Tiso took over the leadership of the Slovak People's Party, provisionally for one year.

(e) **Mgr. Augustyn Vološin, Premier of Carpatho-Ukraine.** "I am a clergyman, and I must consider everything from the point of view of the Church," is how bespectacled Mgr. Vološin usually opens a discussion. The Greek Catholic or Uniate Church to which he belongs has always been, on the whole, in favour of Ukrainian nationalism, and Mgr. Vološin, as head for thirty-five years of the Uniate Theological Training College in Užhorod, the former capital of Ruthenia, had ample opportunities for turning out students inspired with a Ukrainian nationalist mission. Mgr. Vološin's father was a parish priest at Kelečin, where the Premier of Carpatho-Ukraine was born in 1874.

As a teacher Dr Vološin published a grammar of the Ukrainian language, and established a periodical *Nauka* (*Education*), which subsequently developed into the present Ukrainian daily *Nova Svoboda*.

After the War he was Chairman of the Ruthenian National Council which on May 8, 1919, declared the desire of the Ruthenians to be united with Czecho-Slovakia.

Mgr. Vološin's present position in Carpatho-Ukraine shows a tendency to become that of a figurehead—a tendency which he resists with bursts of action from time to time. It is exceedingly difficult to interview Mgr. Vološin, chiefly because he has once or twice embarrassed his colleagues and the Prague Government by naively indiscreet remarks. It is even said that Vološin is now not allowed to answer the telephone himself. He appears to stand in some awe of Julian Revay, the ex-Socialist second Minister in the Chust Government. It has been noticed that Vološin will never talk in Revay's presence. Mgr. Vološin is a tolerant man so far as religious questions go and an active doer of good works. He is probably regarded by his younger colleagues as something of an old fogey who will serve very well to

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

give an air of respectability to their more adventurous schemes.

(iii) THE ECONOMIC POSITION

It is essential to realize that the territorial changes brought about by the Munich Agreement have not fundamentally altered the economic structure of Czecho-Slovakia. The Republic is still a country of approximately balanced agricultural and industrial economy, and, as before, still has a vital interest in markets for its exports. So far as employment goes there has been a small shift in favour of agriculture. The percentages of the former and present populations employed respectively in agriculture and industry are approximately as follows :

AGRICULTURE		INDUSTRY	
<i>Former</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Former</i>	<i>Present</i>
34.64	37.6	34.94	32.07

The change in the structure of the country is thus not very great. Above all, Czecho-Slovakia can still feed her population herself. So far as industry is concerned she has suffered more severely, because, in addition to still having to import all the raw materials which were previously imported, she now has to buy abroad the bulk of her coal supplies—from the mines in the Sudetenland which were previously on Czecho-Slovak territory. Moreover, the Germans are demanding part of the payments for coal in foreign exchange. The price of coal has inevitably gone up, as also of electric current. Electricity at my flat in Prague now costs 20 per cent. more than it did last September.

In December 1938, according to figures published by the Prague Ministry of Labour, Czecho-Slovakia imported 322,421 tons of brown coal, of which 319,701 tons came from former Czech mines in the Sudeten area. In December last year the brown-coal mines left to the Republic produced only 137,974 tons as compared with the country's total output of 1,609,867 tons in December 1936. It is estimated that annual brown-coal production will now be

CZECHOSLOVAKIA BECOMES CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

only about a sixth of what it was before Munich. The position in regard to hard coal is not quite so bad, output for December 1938 being 781,306 tons against 1,319,557 tons in December 1936. To make good at least a part of the losses energetic efforts are being made to exploit existing mines more fully and to develop new ones. Several mines show increases of production of from 12 to 24 per cent. during December 1938 as compared with the position at the same mines in the previous year. Actually 1721 more workers were employed at the mines left to the Republic in December 1938 than at the same mines the year before.

Employment as a whole is actually better than it was in 1937. Though it is difficult to obtain exact figures for unemployment within the present area of the Republic a year ago, it is officially estimated that, whereas there were on the present territory 103,594 persons unemployed at the end of November 1937, on the same date in 1938 only 83,095 were out of work. The establishment of Labour Camps has clearly helped to keep down the unemployment figures, and the big public works, the motor-roads, the canals, and the extensions to the railway system which will get into their stride this spring will still further improve the employment situation.

Industry by industry, the best position at present is held by iron and steel and machinery. Production of pig iron rose from 59,000 tons in October 1938 to 79,000 in December, and of crude steel from 84,000 tons in October to 111,000 tons in December. Some iron-works have taken on extra hands, particularly in the Moravská Ostrava district, where refugees from the area ceded to Poland have found employment.

So far as the manufacture of machinery is concerned it is universally agreed that the demand is at least on the level of the previous year, and in some cases above it. Considerable orders have been received from Germany. The armament firms are at present working only for export. The metal industry, least affected by the territorial changes, is the biggest industry of the new Republic, and holds first place from the export point of view.

In textiles two-fifths of the former production of thread and half the former production of woven materials remain in the country. There will still be an export surplus of cotton, jute, and woollen textiles, particularly of the latter. Centred in Brno, the woollen industry has hardly been affected by the frontier changes. Manufacturers reported in December that, despite their fears for loss of markets owing to the political upheavals, customers abroad have indicated that they wish to continue as before.

According to the State Statistical Office, Czecho-Slovakia's total exports for the last quarter of 1938—*i.e.*, the first three months of the new Republic—exceeded imports by 222,000,000 Kč. The figures for January 1939 show what efforts, largely successful, the country is making to hold its place as an export country. Though Czecho-Slovakia has lost about a third of her former territory, population, and industry, exports for January 1939 were only 15·4 per cent. less than in January 1938.

EPILOGUE

ON January 22 Dr Chvalkovský, the Czecho-Slovak Foreign Minister, went to Berlin and had an interview with Herr von Ribbentrop, the Reich Foreign Minister. Here is the account Dr Chvalkovský gave of the meeting to the Czecho-Slovak Cabinet :

At the outset Herr von Ribbentrop said, according to Dr Chvalkovský, that the Czecho-Slovak Government were mistaken in their interpretation of the European situation if they thought that there would in the near future be any change in the relative positions of the Western Powers and the Axis Powers such as would strengthen Czecho-Slovakia against Germany. It was useless, Herr von Ribbentrop said, for Czecho-Slovakia to cherish hopes of a change in the frontiers. He insisted that Germany had now secured assurances of "active military support" from Hungary and Poland.

Herr von Ribbentrop asserted that there was no doubt that France would yield to all Italy's demands in regard to Tunis and Djibuti. There was no reason to expect intervention by Britain. So long as Mr Chamberlain was in power, said the German Foreign Minister, Britain would not risk war.

In general, said Dr Chvalkovský, the German Foreign Minister sought to impress upon him the idea that Czecho-Slovakia was completely at the mercy of Germany, and that it was ridiculous of Czecho-Slovakia to think otherwise, and to attempt—as in Herr von Ribbentrop's view it was attempting—to sabotage German plans in regard to the Republic. These introductory remarks Dr Chvalkovský characterized as "*Greuelpropaganda*" intended to create a submissive attitude.

Herr von Ribbentrop then dealt with the following concrete questions :

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

1. The Jews. Herr von Ribbentrop stated that the Reich intended to eliminate the Jews in Germany within a year. Further, Germany will not tolerate the Jews in Central Europe. In Czecho-Slovakia all Jews and all "relics of the Beneš régime" are to be removed from the public service and from all positions of influence. The proposals which the Czecho-Slovak Government had already made for dealing with the Jewish question were rejected. These were :

(a) The Jewish problem was to be considered on a nationality basis. No change was to be made in the existing situation of the Jews, but in future a distinction was to be made between those who were Jews by religion, according to whether they were of Czech or German nationality. Czech Jews were not to be restricted in any way. The principle of proportionality was to be applied to Jews of other nationalities—e.g., the number of German Jewish lawyers would be limited, etc.

(b) Jewish *émigrés* who had entered the country since 1933 were to have their permits to stay revised, and were to be gradually got out of the country.

Herr von Ribbentrop stated that it was left to the Czecho-Slovak Government to devise some other plan which would be acceptable to Germany.

2. Herr von Ribbentrop then stated that Czecho-Slovakia must reduce the size of its army. When Dr Chvalkovský asked to what degree it must be reduced Herr von Ribbentrop did not give a direct answer. He said, "In 1918 Herr Beneš and other gentlemen ordered Germany to reduce its army to 90,000. Czecho-Slovakia should act accordingly."

3. A preferential trade treaty is to be concluded with Germany. Before any new industries are established in Czecho-Slovakia Germany must give her consent. This applies particularly to industries which would replace those lost in the Sudetenland.

4. Special privileges are to be given to the German minority in Czecho-Slovakia. The exact nature of these will be determined by a special commission.

5. All existing political and military treaties between

EPILOGUE

Czecho-Slovakia and other states are to be formally denounced. It is not sufficient merely to state that Czecho-Slovakia has no interest in any treaty, as was done with the pact with the U.S.S.R.

Only after the fulfilment of all these demands is Germany prepared to guarantee the Czecho-Slovak frontier, despite the fact that Italy is already prepared to do so.

Some of Herr von Ribbentrop's demands have already been met, notably those in connexion with the Jews, and at first glance it is difficult to see how Czecho-Slovakia can resist the remaining, or, indeed, *any*, German demands. Yet Czecho-Slovakia does resist. That is the significant factor in the present situation of this small country abandoned at Munich to the mercies of the greatest Continental Power. Czecho-Slovakia ever since Munich has been fighting a rearguard action, delaying the consolidation of Germany's grip on Central Europe at every possible point. The Czechs are a naturally democratic people, even the most conservative of them. This characteristic gives them power to resist when it would seem that all possibility of resistance had been swept away. The present Beran Government, perhaps the most conservative Czecho-Slovakia has ever had, can never fully satisfy the Nazis, simply because it is not, and never will be, a Nazi or Fascist Government. Of real Fascists, Czecho-Slovakia has but an insignificant handful, one or two disgruntled individuals with a minute following. They could never form a Government. Because there is no possible alternative Government to the Right of Beran—though there is an alternative to the Left—Germany has to accept the Beran Government as the best for her purposes that she is likely to get. The Czechs know this, and they go on doggedly fighting their rearguard action with all the tenacity which has maintained them in Europe for so many centuries. Great Britain should be grateful for the difficulties which the Czechs still put in the way of German domination.

Czechs to-day tell you that so far as political and cultural liberties are concerned their present position is worse than their position under the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Is it surprising that in these circumstances they all cherish the

hope—and, indeed, the belief—that the present state of affairs cannot last? It is in vain that ministers declare that talk about a return to the *régime* of Masaryk and Beneš cannot be allowed because the very idea is a danger to the national security. The people go on talking just the same. They say, like Hitler, that frontiers are not eternal. In particular, so far as the frontiers with Poland and Hungary are concerned, no one believes that they will remain for many years in their present form. In regard to Germany, the Czechs would agree with Mr Chamberlain when he said that *régimes* do not last for ever.

Perhaps it was not mere bravado when a Czech official said to me, "You know, we are already preparing our documents for the next Peace Conference."

POSTSCRIPT

"TEMPORARY EXTINGUISHMENT"

"This Government, founded upon and dedicated to the principles of human liberty and of democracy, cannot refrain from making known this country's condemnation of the acts which have resulted, in the temporary extinguishment of a free and independent people. . . ."

MR SUMNER WELLES, Washington,
March 17, 1939

"Hitler told Henlein that the Sudeten Germans can't have autonomy because that's promised to the Czechs." So ran one of the political jokes current in Prague in the summer of 1938. In March 1939 the joke became bitter reality. As an alternative to having Prague bombed to bits, Hitler graciously permitted the Czech President to ask for Germany's "protection" over the Czech lands and graciously accepted the "Protectorate" into the German Reich. Apart from the disarming and disbanding of the Czech army, the suppression of the Czecho-Slovak Parliament, the conversion of the Czech currency into German marks, the abolition of the Czecho-Slovak Foreign Ministry and all diplomatic representation abroad, the inclusion of the Czech and Slovak provinces within the German customs frontier, and the appointment of Baron von Neurath as German Governor in Prague—apart from these and other trifles, the "Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia" has been granted autonomy. The rest of the joke too has come true. The Sudeten Germans have no autonomy: they are just ordinary citizens of the Reich.

To the outside world the German annexation of Czecho-Slovakia came like a sudden, unexpected blow. So it came also to the mass of the Czech people. The Prague Government was not, I believe, taken entirely by surprise.

In the first place, the lull in Central Europe which followed

Munich seemed much too good to last. Anybody in Central Europe who follows politics at all is much more familiar with Hitler's plans and methods than are the British. Few believed that the policy of 'appeasement' had any chance of success. Many Czechs also had seen the map published last autumn by the Nazis which showed the stages of Hitler's conquest of Europe, and the Czechs took that map seriously. Rightly so, as events have proved. The map showed the incorporation of Czecho-Slovakia within the Reich as taking place in the autumn of 1938. The incorporation did not quite happen on the date given, but there was no reason for hoping that Hitler had abandoned his intentions. The Czechs also remembered Hitler's ominous remark at Munich that he would have taken much more than the frontier districts surrendered to him if he had carried out the military measures planned. The aggressive manner of von Ribbentrop towards Dr Chvalkovský, the Czecho-Slovak Foreign Minister, when the latter visited him in January 1939 was a confirmation of Czech forebodings. In January and February 1939 both Rudolf Beran, the Prime Minister, and Dr Chvalkovský made speeches warning the public that the time of danger to the nation was not past and that they must be prepared for further troubles. Hitler's New Year speech to the Reichstag was also considered far from reassuring. His remark that Germany would make 100,000,000 out of her 80,000,000 population was particularly noticed—for the simple reason that precisely the additional 20,000,000 lay at Germany's door in the shape of the populations of the rump Czecho-Slovakia and of Hungary, which had roughly 10,000,000 each.

Towards the end of February the signs of impending trouble within the Czecho-Slovak Republic began to multiply. They appeared in Slovakia, which ever since Munich had been the channel through which German pressure was exerted on Prague. German-paid agitation among the Slovaks increased. In Bratislava Gestapo men were observed keeping close company with leaders of the Hlinka Guard, the Slovak Storm Troopers. Slovak politicians made excited speeches in which they attacked

POSTSCRIPT

the Czechs, talked about Czech oppression, and demanded a completely independent Slovakia. The cooler heads knew that such a thing was an impossibility, and therefore concentrated on the question of which neighbouring state should take over the Slovaks, if and when they seceded from the Republic. Karol Sidor, the Commander-in-Chief of the Hlinka Guard and Vice-Prime Minister in the Prague Government, was in touch with Poland and Italy. Other soundings were made in Budapest, and all the time the Germans were encouraging the separatists with promises of help against the Czechs. Bratislava seethed with intrigue, plotters, espionage and counter-espionage.

So far as one can disentangle the threads of plot and counter-plot three points seem clear :

1. Many of the Slovak political bosses wanted—chiefly for personal reasons—the secession of Slovakia.

2. One section of the secessionists was aiming at the incorporation of Slovakia in Germany.

3. Another section wanted Slovakia to go to Poland, and the third province—Carpatho-Ukraine—to go to Hungary.

This last plan had the support of Italy. According to information given me in Prague, when Count Ciano, the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, went to Warsaw at the end of February he offered Italian support for the annexation of Slovakia by Poland. The support of both Poland and Italy for Hungary's annexation of Carpatho-Ukraine was already established. By this plan Poland and Hungary would have obtained a long common frontier of much greater value than that in Carpatho-Ukraine alone, which Hungary had vainly sought after Munich. The Italian aim was, with the help of an expanded Poland and Hungary, to create a chain of states under Italian leadership which would bar Germany's expansion to the South-East. The projected barrier would have included also Rumania and Yugoslavia.

The Germans got to know of this plan, and concentrated all their efforts on frustrating it. It was significant of the state of Italo-German relations that Count Ciano, on his way through Germany to Warsaw, did not see a single German Minister or high official, despite the alleged

brotherly love between the German and Italian Governments.

At this point it is necessary to say something about the peculiar ways of the Slovak politicians, which, above all, made possible the various intrigues of Germany and Italy. The part played in the German annexation of Czecho-Slovakia by the conceit, childishness, and incompetence of the Slovaks is no small one.

Anxious to give the Slovaks no excuse for complaining of Czech oppression, the Beran Government in Prague had, after Munich, given the Bratislava Government its head. Within their own province the Slovaks were allowed to do more or less what they liked. The result of this was that the few intelligent, responsible Slovaks in important positions rapidly got pushed on one side, and lost what little influence they had ever had. Obscure individuals, apparently devoid of patriotism, of any feeling for their brother Slavs, the Czechs, or even of common sense, intrigued and blustered their way to the top. These people were simple adventurers. They wanted money, motor-cars, resounding title's, and the maximum of personal pomp and circumstance. They seem to have been quite indifferent to the means by which these things were obtained. They took German money, Polish money, Hungarian money. Above all, they were incredibly blind and stupid. They believed that an independent Slovakia would be financially subsidized by Germany. Even if such a promise were made—which is doubtful—the smallest grain of sense ought to have shown the Slovaks that independence under such conditions would be a farce. But sense was a quality which seemed peculiarly lacking among those who ran Slovak affairs after Munich. A few simple-minded idealists may have thought that an independent Slovakia was possible as well as desirable. Perhaps there was even a grain of idealism in the most blatant adventurers. But with most of the Slovak bosses the possession of a bank account and an official or ministerial title completely turned the heads of men who hitherto had been only minor journalists, professors, and village politicians. For a mess of pottage which cost Germany little they cheerfully sold away

POSTSCRIPT

their birthright. Inevitably these conceited, naïve tub-thumpers were putty in the hands of the hard-headed, shrewd leaders of Nazi Germany. The Nazis played up to the Slovaks before their faces and laughed at them behind their backs. When the Germans entered Bratislava there were pathetically comic instances of Hlinka Guards effusively greeting the Germans with: "We are all brothers! Give us money!" That made the Germans laugh again.

By the beginning of March the various forms of separatism in Slovakia were seriously threatening the internal coherence of the Czecho-Slovak State. In an acute form arose the question: Was Czecho-Slovakia one state or three? Under the autonomy acts of Slovakia and Carpatho-Ukraine these two provinces were self-governing so far as internal affairs went, but foreign affairs and defence were in the hands of the Central Government.

The Slovaks refused to abide by this. The Bratislava Government concluded an option agreement with Hungary without ever informing Prague that negotiations for such an agreement were taking place. The Slovaks refused to co-operate with Prague in making a new trade treaty with France. They demanded a separate Slovak army. They sent emissaries to Berlin with offers of mineral and oil concessions in Slovakia. Finally the Prague Government decided that things had gone too far. It was all very well to let the Slovaks run their own affairs, but they were doing it in a way which was imperilling the very existence of Slovaks and Czechs alike. Accordingly the Slovak Ministers were invited to come to Prague for a conference with Prime Minister Beran to straighten things out.

What brought matters finally to a head was the appalling financial mess into which the Bratislava Government had got itself. Slovakia's budget for 1939-40 showed a deficit of £7,000,000. In March 1939 the Slovak Government had not sufficient money in hand to pay salaries and other administrative expenses for more than two months. One of the chief causes of this impending bankruptcy was the reckless way in which civil service jobs had been created and

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

distributed as a reward for services rendered. The Hlinka Guard too cost a great deal of money.

There was not the faintest hope of raising the funds in Slovakia itself, which is almost exclusively an agricultural country with a population of poor peasants and a small middle class. Between 85 per cent. and 95 per cent. of the economic strength of Czecho-Slovakia is concentrated in the Czech lands. Whereas taxation yields 564 crowns a head in Bohemia and Moravia, it produces only 198 crowns per head in Slovakia and Carpatho-Ukraine.

It was obvious that only the Czechs or a foreign state could pay the Slovak bills. The Czechs were ready to find the money—it was in the interests of the Republic that they should—but on condition that the Slovaks mended their ways. There was to be no more talk about secession. A separate Slovak army was out of the question, though Prague was perfectly prepared to appoint capable Slovaks to the higher military posts. Above all, there was to be no more negotiating with foreign powers behind the backs of the Prague Government. The Slovaks were to have every opportunity of consultation with the Foreign Office, but they were not to act independently of it. The Czech standpoint seemed reasonable enough. But it hurt the vanity of the Slovaks to have to come to Prague and accept money on Prague's terms. That hurt vanity seems to have driven all reason out of the heads of the Slovak negotiators. For instance, one of their demands was that 25 per cent. of all grades of all branches of the Czecho-Slovak civil service *personnel* must be Slovaks. When a Czech Minister replied, "But there aren't enough educated Slovaks to fill that number of posts," the Slovak answer was: "Never mind. We'll send uneducated people. If it should be absolutely impossible to find a Slovak for a post then a Czech may have it, but only on the understanding that it is a concession from the Slovaks." What was to be done with such people?

At another point in the discussion the Slovak delegation said, "If Prague doesn't pay up—without conditions—we shall go to the Hungarians." To which Prime Minister Beran replied by slowly taking out his watch and saying,

POSTSCRIPT

"Gentlemen, you must hurry. The train for Budapest leaves in an hour." It was the only possible answer. By Monday, March 6, it looked as though common sense would prevail, and the Slovaks would climb down from their high horse. The Slovak Government that day decided to continue negotiations with Prague. Beran's party issued a statement saying that there was reason to think a compromise would be reached on the basis of the Constitution which declared Slovakia to be an integral part of the Republic. Another cause for optimism and an encouragement to firm action by Prague was the apparent reserve of Germany. Berlin seemed disposed to regard the matter as an internal one which Czechs and Slovaks must settle between themselves. That this impression was given in order to mislead Prague is certainly true. But, in any case, the Czechs had no choice: if Slovakia were separated as the result of German intervention then the Czechs could do nothing about it. But that was no reason for sitting still and allowing a handful of paid agitators to detach Slovakia by mere proclamation.

On Thursday, March 9, M. Teplanský, the Slovak Finance Minister, who was then in Prague, informed Prime Minister Beran that Mgr. Tiso, the Slovak Premier, was about to proclaim the independence of Slovakia. There was to be a *putsch* by the Hlinka Guard. M. Teplanský asked the Prague Government to intervene. There was a seven hours' Cabinet meeting which lasted till after midnight. It was known that Germany was supporting the Slovak separatists, and there was a possibility that Czech suppression of Slovak separatism might itself be suppressed by Germany. Finally, however, the decision was taken to risk German intervention. General Syrový, the Minister of Defence, issued instructions. In anticipation of such a crisis as this he had several days before moved masses of Czech troops into Eastern Moravia, so that they could be in Bratislava within a few hours.

In the early hours of Friday morning the tanks and motorized units were speeding over the Slovak border. By dawn they had surrounded Bratislava. Railway stations,

post-offices, and all public buildings were occupied by troops. A machine-gun detachment and armoured cars drew up outside an explosives factory which it was known the Hlinka Guard planned to seize. Barracks and offices of the Guard were occupied, and members of the organization arrested and disarmed. All motor traffic entering or leaving Bratislava was stopped and examined by sentries. Telephone communication with the outside world was cut off. Professor Tuka, of Bratislava University, and Šano Mach, the Slovak Government Propaganda Chief, who were the two extremist leaders of the separatist movement under German inspiration, were arrested and removed to Moravská Ostrava. Simultaneously President Háchá in Prague issued a decree declaring that Mgr. Tiso and three of his Ministers, Ďurčanský, Pružinský, and Vančo, were dismissed from office. All four were placed under police supervision.

There was no resistance to the swift action of the Prague Government. The Hlinka Guard did not attempt to fight. A few members of the Guard attempted to bring the workers in Bratislava out on strike, but with no success. The Czechs showed again, as they had done with the Henleinist *putsch* in September, that they were easily able to keep order within their own frontiers. Indeed, the counter-*putsch* at Bratislava was a really brilliantly executed piece of work, for within a few hours the plotters had been rounded up, the execution of the plot made impossible, and complete control established in Slovakia.

A second decree by President Háchá appointed as Slovak Premier M. Josef Sivák, the white-haired, distinguished-looking Minister of Education in the Slovak Government. As he was on his way to Rome for the coronation of the Pope M. Teplanský temporarily took over the Premiership. In the afternoon Dr Martin Sokol, President of the Slovak Diet, arrived in Prague in order to consult with the President on a new Slovak Government, as required by the Constitution. During the week-end a Government was formed, with Karol Sidor as Premier. Sidor was believed to be in favour of the plan for giving Slovakia to Poland. Some circles in Prague also regarded this plan as a possibility if the worst

POSTSCRIPT

came to the worst. That is to say, if Slovakia was going to be annexed anyway it was better that it should go to Poland rather than to Germany, which represented a far greater danger to the continued existence of the Czech and Slovak nations. Despite the Poles' shabby treatment of Czecho-Slovakia in the autumn of 1939, there still remains a certain feeling of sympathy between Czechs and Slovaks on the one side and Poles on the other. All are Slav nations; the languages of all are very much alike, and, in any case, Poland does not possess the power to denationalize Czechs and Slovaks to the extent that Germany does. The growing threat to Poland since Germany's triumph at Munich had also tended to bring Poles and Czecho-Slovaks together. There was another reason too for appointing Sidor. Prague could not eliminate all the Slovak politicians, and Sidor was less objectionable than many. He had considerable popular support, and as he had been in Prague the day Mgr. Tiso's *putsch* was to have come off he was obviously not involved in it. So Sidor was made Premier, and for twenty-four hours it looked as though the Slovak crisis was over.

The week-end of March 11-12 was the most anxious one since the autumn of 1938. We did not know then that worse was yet to come. During Saturday and Sunday portents of danger increased. First, Mgr. Tiso, despite the fact that he was supposed to be under police supervision, telephoned to Berlin and asked for help. Secondly, Ďurčanský, one of the sacked Ministers—also under supervision—managed to get over the frontier to Vienna. From there he broadcast a speech saying:

We need a free, independent Slovakia. This will be brought about within a very short while . . . Slovaks and Guards! The hour which we all await with longing will soon strike!

In the same speech he implicitly criticized Sidor and the new Slovak Cabinet. He said:

Our best men are in prison, and those who succeeded in escaping the clutch of the Czech soldiery are in hiding. . . . Only those are left at liberty whom Prague expects will be obedient, and who, despite their dead and wounded brothers, will accept all orders.

The talk about dead and wounded was nonsense. To be precise, one Hlinka Guard had been killed by accident. Nevertheless we had heard such extravagant talk in September, and remembered what it signified then. So there was a reason for taking it seriously.

As Sunday wore on the possibility of a German intervention in Slovakia began to look like a probability. There were anti-Semitic disturbances in Bratislava. Jewish shop-windows were smashed, not merely by Hlinka Guards, but also by Germans. The Nazi headquarters at Bratislava—which has a big German minority—were barricaded and guarded by armed members of the F.S. organization which led the Sudetenland *putsch*. German Storm Troopers began coming over the frontier from Austria. It was said that they were smuggling arms into Bratislava.

Still more alarming was the fact that all the week-end the German radio kept up a barrage of anti-Czech propaganda, such as had accompanied the Sudeten struggle. The Czechs, it was said, were murdering and torturing innocent, harmless Germans and Slovaks. The German minorities in Brno, Olomouc, Jihlava, and elsewhere were allegedly living under a reign of terror. There was not an atom of truth in all this. What did happen was nothing but persistent and deliberate provocation by the Germans—provocation, however, which failed to produce one single German martyr.

I can give exact details of what happened in Brno, the chief city of Moravia. In Brno the F.S. men staged parades through the streets. They shouted, "Heil Hitler! Down with the Jews!" and such-like slogans. This had no effect on the crowds in the streets. Then the F.S. men went round spitting at the Czech police and slapping their faces. Those policemen stood absolutely still. They made no arrests; they did not even hit back. Then an F.S. man went to the police-station and said he had been kicked in the stomach by a Czech and seriously injured. The police summoned four doctors, two Czech and two German. The doctors could find no sign of injury. Finally, in disgust, the German marched out of the

POSTSCRIPT

station, shouting insults and showing every sign of being in perfect physical condition.

In other towns the details varied, but the German methods were the same. Everywhere the Czech police and *gendarmierie* showed that extraordinary self-control which every foreign resident in Czecho-Slovakia notices, and which at times has seemed a mistaken tactic.

All Sunday night and until the early hours of Monday morning I was in constant touch with Czech officials and with diplomatic circles in Prague. From hour to hour the general depression deepened. There were indications that much more was involved than German intervention to give Slovakia independence. Report spoke of a German hint that Prime Minister Beran had better resign. I was given discreet suggestions that the Slovak question was now as good as over, and that I should turn my attention to what was happening in Bohemia and Moravia. Finally about 2 A.M. on Monday morning, from quarters in touch with the Czech General Staff, I got the first warning that a German occupation of all the Czech lands was intended. Irreproachable though my source was, I still could hardly credit such a possibility. And I felt certain that my office in London would want very solid assurances before they 'splashed' the news as it deserved. Finally, after a long wait for my call to come through, I got London on the 'phone and explained the whole situation. I took the most cautious view possible, and eventually the news appeared thus :

Grave apprehensions are felt in Prague official circles this morning that German troops may occupy the Czech city of Brno. They are expected to take this step in support of their demand that Slovakia shall be established as an independent state under German protection. If the Prague Cabinet does not give way it is feared that the Germans will march right across the narrow neck of land that now divides the two halves of Czecho-Slovakia.

That was the first indication of the coming German occupation which appeared in the British Press. The rapid march of events proved that my caution was super-

fluous. Yet I have no doubt that any solid Tory who happened to see the *Daily Herald* on Monday morning must have snorted and muttered, "Sensation mongering!" or "These damn' Socialists again!"

On Monday nothing happened—that is, nothing except an hour and a half's talk in Berlin between Mgr. Tiso and Hitler. Tiso got over the frontier, and flew from Vienna accompanied by Ďurčanský and Herr Karmasin, the leader of the German minority in Slovakia. Why the Czechs ever allowed Tiso out of the country is a mystery. I suspect this was yet another instance of their habit of giving every one a chance to be good boys. It was certainly a mistake this time.

Immediately after the talk with Hitler Tiso got on the 'phone to Prague and passed on the German orders. They were :

1. All Czech troops to be withdrawn from Slovakia.
2. Slovakia to be an independent State under German protection.
3. The Slovak Diet to be summoned by President Hácha to hear the proclamation of independence.

There was nothing that President Hácha and the Prague Government could do except say yes, for they knew very well that dozens of divisions of German troops were massed round the defenceless frontiers ready to march in at any moment.

At 10 A.M. on Tuesday the sixty-two deputies of the Slovak Diet met in secret session. Several hundred Hlinka Guards, armed with rifles and bayonets, surrounded the building. Small crowds gathered in the streets, but there was little interest. Even the most dim-witted Slovaks began to realize by this time that their so-called independence was nothing but a bad joke.

Still making the motions of political freedom, Šano Mach, now reinstated in office, came to the microphone at 12.30 P.M. He said :

I inform the Slovak people that the Slovak Parliament, acting in the spirit of the late Father Hlinka, has decided to

POSTSCRIPT

proclaim the independence of Slovakia under the protection of Germany. We have carried through this historic revolution without the least shedding of blood, and thereby proved that we are a fully mature nation.

Tiso then sent a telegram to Hitler asking for his help and protection. And Hitler replied graciously according the same. That evening the Reichswehr entered Bratislava.

In Prague the Government and the foreign Legations had no doubt by this time that the end of Czecho-Slovakia was only a matter of hours. The Cabinet met again at 11.30 A.M. after an all-night sitting, and resigned. At 4 P.M. President Hácha and Dr Chvalkovský left Prague by train for Berlin, whither they had been invited for a conference with Hitler. In fact, if not in form, Dr Hácha was by this time no longer President of the Republic. He was head only of the Czech nation.

Every one in Prague was certain that the conference with Hitler would be on exactly the same lines as the Führer's meeting with Dr Schuschnigg at Berchtesgaden—the meeting which preceded the annexation of Austria. It was clear that Dr Hácha and Dr Chvalkovský were going to hear Hitler's plan for the annexation of Czecho-Slovakia. In actual fact the German occupation had begun before the Czech leaders had even reached Berlin. Their train did not get in till 10 P.M., and by eight o'clock the German troops had occupied Moravská Ostrava, the important railway junction and industrial centre in Northern Moravia, near the Polish frontier.

The Czech public took the secession of Slovakia with complete apathy. But as the day wore on the excitement and tension increased; many people in Prague had listened to the German wireless, and drawn their own conclusions. In the evening big crowds collected in the Wenceslas Square. Two hundred students from the German University marched down the avenue shouting, "Heil Hitler! Out with the Jews!" Hundreds of police were on duty to keep the crowds away from the demonstrators. Within an hour or so, however, all was again quiet, though scores of police remained on duty most of the night.

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

Over and over again during the day I was asked, "Won't Britain even protest?" Another question asked almost as frequently was: "What crime have we committed to deserve this?"

By midnight, as Dr Hácha and Dr Chvalkovský were talking to Hitler, the German troops all round the Czech lands were waiting for the order to advance. At 6 A.M. the first tanks and motorized units moved off, into Brno, Pilsen, Jihlava, Olomouc. By 9.15 A.M. General Heppner and the first German soldiers were in Prague. Then followed the most dismal and depressing day the Czechs had ever experienced. A nation of the most decent and honest people in Europe, they were forced to endure the last humiliations to their national pride that the Nazi Reich could conceive.

It is difficult to describe the shock I experienced at the sight of the steel-helmeted German troops in the streets of Prague. In the course of the past year I had got to love this beautiful ancient city and its kindly, sincere people. I had lived and worked in daily contact with dozens of Czechs in all walks of life. I had discussed politics and private affairs, life and art, with journalists, officials, politicians, business-men. I had spluttered my awkward attempts at the Czech language to our maid, to shopkeepers, taxi-drivers. I had spent happy week-ends in the country with men who had made the great march of the Legionaries through Siberia—men who had worked side by side with Masaryk and Beneš. I had got to know and love Czecho-Slovakia better than any foreign country. And now that country had vanished from the map. Now, by no right except that of might, Czecho-Slovakia had been destroyed as an independent state. All the work of the Czechs of the past century to gain their freedom had been cancelled out. They were once more to be the slaves of German overlords. They were to plough and reap, work in office and factory, not for themselves, but for Germany. "It is not right," I said, "that one nation should be able to do this to another."

All day through the snow-covered streets of Prague

POSTSCRIPT

rumbled and roared the tanks, the armoured cars, the anti-aircraft guns, the troop lorries, of the Third Reich. In the narrow, winding lanes, among the baroque palaces of the Old Town, the jackboots of the German infantry tramped over the cobblestones.

Early in the morning I was walking about the Wenceslas Square, the Moat, and the National Avenue. I heard the Czech people hiss and whistle as their conquerors drove past. I saw a German soldier, apparently angered by the hissing, draw his revolver and threaten the people. Immediately a new burst of hissing broke from the crowd, and men and women shook their fists. Hour after hour the troops drove round the city. They grinned with triumph.

Weary and miserable, I made for the Charles Bridge—with its statues of the Czech saints one of the loveliest things in the world. I wanted to go over to the Hradčany, the ancient Capitol of Prague. The bridge was blocked by troop lorries and a platoon of marching infantry. Behind them trailed a string of private cars—unable to move except as the Germans moved.

Outside the Town Hall, on the Old Town Square, there burn continually two flames in memory of the Czech Unknown Soldier. Here the Nazis of Prague decided to show their feelings. Fifty of them marched up, unrolled a long swastika flag, and stood holding it in front of the golden flames while the Nazi cameramen made their record.

There was no triumphant welcome for the German troops, even from their own people. A few hundred of the German colony in Prague, mostly students and schoolgirls, were out on the streets to cheer, shout, "We thank our Führer!" and wave little flags. But their voices were thin and hardly heard.

From early in the morning the Czechs queued up outside the banks and shops. They wanted money, and they wanted to get goods for their money, which they feared would not be worth much before long. But the banks refused to pay out more than 500 crowns, and the shops closed early.

All day the Czech officers and soldiers were reporting at

their headquarters to surrender their arms. The officers and N.C.O.'s were ordered to wear mufti from the following day. Airports throughout the country were occupied by the German Air Force. All military 'planes were seized.

The German general in command of the occupation proclaimed a curfew for 9 P.M. At that hour all trams and taxis went off the streets. All *cafés* and restaurants closed. There were no cinemas, theatres, concerts. By 8.30 P.M. Prague was a dead city. Standing on the Hradčany hill, I looked down over the river, the winding streets, the spires. The snow on the roofs, in squares and gardens, gleamed with a gentle, soft radiance in the light of the street-lamps. No one was afoot in all the wide city. Now and then a German lorry or soldier on a motor-cycle roared by. There was no other sign of life.

Then through the deserted streets Hitler drove into Prague and up to the Hradčany. With him went von Ribbentrop, the Foreign Minister; Himmler, Chief of the German Police; General Keitel, the Chief of Staff, and Dr Dietrich, the Reich Press Chief. The Czecho-Slovak flag was hauled down; the swastika flag went up. Once again the lords of Germany slept in the palace of the Bohemian kings.

After the soldiers came the jackals—the German secret police. The often-told, horrible story of arrests and suicides which Berlin and Vienna know so well repeated itself in Prague. There was added, among many bitter ironies, this—the Chief of the Prague police was forced to issue a statement that there had been no increase in the suicide rate since March 15! I laughed when I read that. Only two days before the *Expres*, organ of some pitiful Czech Fascists, had gleefully recounted twenty cases of Jews committing, or attempting to commit, suicide. Besides that, I had the best of reasons for knowing something about the matter. Two houses from mine a woman hanged herself in the window of her flat. She was an *émigré* from Germany. The father of a friend of mine shot himself. On the night before Hitler's arrival I saw off at the Wilson Station two old people, trembling and ill with

POSTSCRIPT

worry, who had decided to try and get to Yugoslavia. On the Austrian frontier the old lady was stripped by three Storm Troopers; the English girl accompanying them was arrested. In Prague the houses of almost every British and other foreign resident were besieged by friends, acquaintances, and friends' friends, begging for help, and, if there could be no help, at least for a little comforting.

I came across so many cases of heart-breaking tragedy. A man and his wife after months of striving and innumerable difficulties had succeeded in escaping from Germany. They arrived in Prague three days before Hitler. The former manager of a Czecho-Slovak newspaper—he is not a Jew—he had every preparation and arrangement made to leave for Australia on March 15. Now he may never get away. His wife was ill from the strain and anxiety, and ready to kill herself at any moment. The husband dared not leave her alone.

Every day enormous crowds packed the narrow street outside the British Legation and Consulate. Thousands were clamouring for permits to get away. These unfortunate people provided yet another opportunity for the ingenuity of the Gestapo. They sent a man to photograph the crowd! An official of the Consulate protested, and called a Czech policeman to send the cameraman away. The policeman was ready to do so; but two Gestapo men then appeared and said, "Oh, no! The photographer stays. We want the pictures for our records."

I do not know how many arrests were made. Some said 5000, some double that. But I do know it was sufficient to have been a friend of Dr Beneš to get into gaol. I know that among the men arrested were the former Chief of the Foreign Office Press Department, several senators, deputies, legionaries, professors, and newspaper editors. Many eminent men went into hiding, and simply disappeared; their families not even knowing where they were.

Terrorization like this is not a question of statistics. If only one suicide resulted from the German occupation of Czecho-Slovakia I still say it is not right that any State system should have this power over human lives. It is the meanest form of cowardice.

The Germans endeavoured to justify the occupation of Czecho-Slovakia on the ground that the Beran Government had fallen back into the "bad ways" of the Beneš *régime*, and was not co-operating with the Reich as it should. Of course it was not. Of course Beran resisted as best he could. Beran is a Czech. There is not a single man of character or ability in the Czech nation who would have done otherwise. The Czechs have passive resistance, the gift of silent obstructionism, in their bones. It became immediately evident the day after the occupation. The German army staged great victory parades through Prague. The Czech population paid scarcely any attention. When a hundred bombers deafened the sky with the roar of their engines the ordinary people smiled, and said, "Quite a good show." But they were not impressed. When two hundred tanks rattled through the city the Czechs looked on passively, and said, "They look pretty old stuff." The Czechs made friends with the German soldiers. Mingling with the crowd that watched Hitler drive away from the Hradčany, I heard one old man telling a German private all about the best and cheapest beer and cigarettes in Prague. Czechs stood round the armoured cars and machine-guns and examined the mechanism. They told the soldiers what stamps to put on their postcards home. They exchanged cigarettes. Certainly the German troops behaved, on the whole, excellently, and this helped to soften the shock to the population. But, none the less, the amiability and non-chalance of the Czechs is a real thing, because it is based upon a very deep-rooted and tenacious power of resistance. The Czechs can be led, above all by argument, but not driven. Unless the Germans are very tactful and skilful in handling their new subjects they will get into difficulties. Any attempt to bully or slave-drive the Czechs will be met with stubborn opposition. Orders will not be obeyed; organization will break down; in small but effective ways there will be sabotage.

For the time being the Czechs can do little within their own country. But their organizations abroad will get to work. Already there is talk of the formation of a Provisional

POSTSCRIPT

Czecho-Slovak Government in the U.S.A., where ex-President Beneš and Jan Masaryk are now living. On March 17 Dr Beneš issued to the Press in Chicago—where are 200,000 Czechs—a message saying :

Before the conscience of the world and before history I am obliged to proclaim that the Czechs and Slovaks will never accept this unbearable imposition on their sacred rights, and that they will never cease their struggle until these rights are reinstated for their beloved country.

From what I know of the Czech people I am convinced this is true. The Czechs will bide their time—but they will be masters again in their own house.

APPENDIX I

THE S.d.P. MEMORANDUM

THE following summary of the S.d.P. memorandum is made from the German text issued by the S.d.P. under the title of "Sketch for the Reorganization of Internal Relations on the Basis of the Eight Points from the Speech of Konrad Henlein, Chairman of the Sudeten German Party, at Karlsbad on April 24, 1938":

(1) Recognition of equality among the various nations and national groups to be guaranteed by the Constitution.

(2) Guarantee of the democratic principle of national sovereignty: (a) every national group to have the right to manage its own affairs; (b) and to have an equal share in the conduct of State business; (c) protection against denationalization; (d) unrestricted rights to such groups to foster common national interests.

(3) National regional reorganization: The unified State area must be subdivided into Czech, German, Slovak, etc., national areas. In defining the national frontier the harm done to the German national group in regard to conditions in 1918 is to be made good.

(4) The application of these principles of reform requires the division of legislation and administration between organs of the State and organs of self-administration of the nationalities and national groups. The Czech and German populations to have the right of determining their own national and territorial requirements on the basis of their own sovereignty.

A list of nineteen heads of matters which are to come under national self-administration then follows. It includes finance, police, national registers, education—including pre-military training—social welfare, health.

(5) Division of legislative powers between the National Assembly and Diets of each nationality. In the Assembly national sections (*Kurien*) represent "the legal personality of nationalities and national groups and their sovereignty." The *Kurien* are to form the Diet of each nationality.

(6) Executive power to be exercised as before by the

President of the Republic and the Government. *Ex officio* members of the Government are the Presidents of the respective self-governing administrations, who are, therefore, independent of the confidence of Parliament. The Presidents of the self-governing administrations are elected by the national Diets for six years. The appointment is to be confirmed by the President of the Republic. Should confirmation be refused the Diet can none the less insist on its choice. The Presidents of the local self-governing administrations are to be members of the Supreme State Defence Council.

(7) Reorganization of the Administration. The Ministries of Education, Social Welfare, Health, and Unification of Laws to be abolished, these affairs being transferred to the local self-governing administrations. National sections consisting of officials of the appropriate nationality to be established in the offices of the President, the Prime Minister, and the Ministries of the Interior, Justice, Trade, Agriculture, Public Works, Railways, and Posts. In the Ministries of Finance and Foreign Affairs special measures to be taken for the representation of the special economic interests of the different nationality areas.

(8) Appointment to public services in the national areas to be reserved to members of the nationality concerned.

(9) The courts of second instance and the Supreme Court to have national sections.

(10) In the reform of the Language Law the following principles must apply: "The State speaks the language of its citizens; the higher authorities speak the language of the lower authorities; equal authorities each use their own language. . . the language of the self-governing administrations is the language of their nation." Special measures are to be taken in Prague to express outwardly that it belongs in common to all the nationalities.

(11) All public and State-controlled enterprises to have national sections.

(12) Budgetary expenses to be divided nationally, in accordance with an agreement between the national sections in Parliament.

(13) The reorganization of the State is to be carried out by constitutional laws.

(14) Special legal and administrative measures to be taken to make good to the German national group the damage done, in particular in the following respects: Land-reform, University laws, minority schools, laws *re* the Legionaries, reorganization of banks.

APPENDIX II

THE FOURTH PLAN

THE following is the text of the official summary—issued on September 9, 1938—of the Czecho-Slovak Government's Fourth Plan for settling the nationalities problem which was communicated to the Sudeten German Party leaders on September 7, 1938. Sub-headings only have been inserted :

In formulating its proposals the Government has proceeded on the principle that there must be an immediate, concrete, and practical solution of the chief questions in dispute, in order to attain a lasting and effective agreement on the nationalities question in the Republic. All other questions are reserved for detailed negotiations. In solving them the sovereignty, integrity, and unity of the State are borne in mind.

PROPORTIONALITY IN PUBLIC SERVICE

In settling the question of public employees and workers the principle accepted is that all nationalities have a claim to a share in all grades of State employment corresponding to their percentage among the citizens of the State. This principle applies to all departments, and is obligatory for all future engagement of new assistance. In so far as this relationship cannot be put into practice in individual departments the exception will be made good in other departments. In order to reach conditions corresponding to this relationship as quickly as possible, the national proportionality in the employment of new German assistance will be so regulated for the next ten years that the appropriate percentage will be reached at the end of these ten years.

For that reason it will be possible to accept citizens of German nationality who are in private employment or in the professions, providing that they are qualified for the appropriate grade of service, and equally it will be possible to admit again employees who were dismissed or prematurely pensioned

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

when the conditions to-day granted for the exercise of Staet service are available.

GERMAN OFFICIALS IN GERMAN DISTRICTS

The principle of transferability of State employees will, in general, be preserved. Within the limits of this principle, however, each nationality is granted the claim that the national composition of the State employees and workers in the individual administrative spheres shall correspond to the national composition of the population. In applying this principle consideration will naturally be taken for the requirements of the State as a whole.

The interest of the State requires that to a certain extent employees of different nationalities should serve in all parts of the Republic. In regard to the German nationality, it is calculated that at a maximum 30 per cent. of the employees of German nationality will be distributed in an area where citizens of German nationality do not constitute the majority. The same applies in the appointment of judges, in which question the principle of the non-transferability of judges remains unchanged. The principles mentioned apply similarly to State undertakings, monopolies, funds, establishments, and institutions.

In the composition of the staffs of the central offices and the higher courts the population divisions of the whole State apply for all categories and grades.

PARITY IN SUPERVISORY COMMISSIONS

To guarantee these claims parity commissions for the individual nationalities will be set up under the Cabinet. They will consist of representatives of the Government and of the nationalities concerned ; they will be presided over by a State official of the appropriate nationality. The representatives of the nationalities in these parity commissions will be elected by members of Parliament of the same nationality, in accordance with the principle of proportional representation.

The nationality commissions will keep the records of the State employees of the nationality in question ; they will examine whether new engagements correspond to the applications made and to the prescribed proportion ; they will keep a check on whether the fixed proportions of State em-

THE FOURTH PLAN

ployees and workers are locally employed and made use of in accordance with the above principles.

The principles of proportionality are also applied to the employees and appointment of members and organs of other State offices and institutions, such as auxiliary councils, permanent commissions, privileged undertakings, etc. Similar principles will also apply to the employees and workers of a territorial and divisional self-government, of public corporations, of institutions, undertakings, funds, and establishments of self-government, as also to the members of self-governing bodies, their commissions and undertakings.

FOUR NATIONAL BUDGETS

The principle of proportionality will also apply in matters of the State economy. In consequence, expenditure and credit items in the State budget devoted to the needs of education and culture, public health, social welfare, and public works will be set out and divided according to the nationality divisions, so as to correspond to the percentage of the separate nationalities in the population of the State. A decision will be taken on the question of introducing this principle in other departments after further investigation of the matter.

In the allocation of contracts for work and supplies for the State, for State undertakings, institutions, funds, and establishments, the total sum devoted to the purpose will be so divided as to benefit the separate nationalities, in accordance with their proportion of the total population of the State. The same principle will apply in regard to undertakings in which the State has an essential capital interest.

For the carrying out of this agenda also a parity nationality commission for each nationality will be established. It will consist of representatives of the Government and of the nationality concerned, and will be presided over by the President of the Supreme Accounts Control Office or his deputy. Each nationality will be represented in the commission by members elected by members of Parliament of the same nationality, in accordance with the principle of proportional representation. It is the duty of these commissions to see that the above-mentioned principle of proportionality is maintained in supplies and work for the State. The principle of proportionality in the State economy applies similarly in the case of territorial and divisional self-government and of public corporations.

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

£5,000,000 LOAN FOR GERMANS

The Government, in solving the nationality problem, also proposes immediate economic and financial help for the districts and industries most affected by the crisis. This help will be carried out by the Government granting a loan of 1,000,000,000 Kč (£7,000,000) by the end of this year at the latest to the districts and industries which have been most seriously affected by the effects of the economic crisis and of unemployment. Of this sum 700,000,000 Kč (£5,000,000) will be allocated to industries employing German workers and to districts with German population.

NATIONAL POLICE

In the public security service, according to the proposals prepared, the former regulation will be reintroduced by which the maintenance of public order and security is divided between the State organs (*gendarmérie*) and organs of local security (police).

LANGUAGE EQUALITY

The Government proposals for the solution of the nationality problem also provide for a modification of the Language Law. The existing Language Law will, in so far as is advisable and practical for the State administration, be so amended as to establish equality among the German, Russian (Little Russian), Hungarian, Polish, and Czecho-Slovak languages.

CANTONAL SELF-ADMINISTRATION

The aim of the Government's decisions is the establishment of harmony and co-operation between the different nationalities of the State. On that account the Government plan accepts the principle of national self-government, which will be carried out in the form of a system of Cantons (*Gaue*).

Public administration will be conducted by organs of the State and of self-government. The self-government bodies will, like the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, be elected according to the principle of universal, equal, direct, and secret voting, with proportional representation.

Self-government authority will cover all matters which, having regard to the unity and security of the State, need not unconditionally be reserved to the State itself, and which are calculated to make possible and to promote the equal and

THE FOURTH PLAN

fullest possible development of the qualities and powers of the different nationalities within the bounds of the whole State. True security is thus to be given to the integrity and unity of the State.

The territorial basis of self-government is, where possible, to be demarcated according to the nationality of the population, taking into account the geographical position, the economic conditions, and communications.

The national minorities which remain within the different self-government areas will be protected by a system of *Curia*, and they will be assured the protection of their national rights within the self-government areas, in accordance with the principle of reciprocity.

NATIONAL PROTECTION AND REGISTERS

The members of the different nationalities will be placed under the protection of special laws, not only in respect of their membership of a particular nationality, but also in regard to their property and to protection against political, social, and economic oppression.

The members of the different nationalities will be given the possibility of defending their national rights as their collective possession, should these special laws be infringed by any measure of the organs of self-government or of the State. The methods of this protection are precisely outlined in the Government proposals.

The nationality of each citizen will be determined by national registers. The financial means for the organs of self-government will be provided by appropriations from the means of the State, or from their own revenue, until a new arrangement of the taxation and duty system is carried out.

To provide for the realization and effectual representation of the equal rights of the nationalities, and the application of their basic rights, they will be given definite *curial* rights in all organs of self-government.

For dealing with affairs of the different nationalities which come under central State authorities, in so far as the character and scope of the affairs allow, departments or sections will be set up, which will be staffed by members of the appropriate nationality.

In order to provide for the effective execution of the claims of the nationalities in the sphere of State and self-government, the law concerning the Constitutional Court will be appropriately amended.

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

Disputes as to authority between the organs of public administration will be decided by a special court.

The courts of higher instance will be organized, as advisable, in national divisions.

The districts of State government and of self-government and of the courts will be adapted to each other.

These proposals, in so far as they require no legislative regulation, will be put into practice without delay. The new Bills required will be worked out by the Government with the collaboration of representatives of the nationalities. The completed Bills will be presented to Parliament for acceptance.

INDEX

- AGRARIAN PARTY, CZECH, 29, 55,
 109, 146, 159, 263, 265, 290
 Alsace, and Germany, 200
 Anglo-French Plan, 196 *et seq.*, 201,
 209, 210
 Anglo-Italian Agreement, 50
Anschluss, and Germany, 20, 23, 24 ;
 and Czecho-Slovakia, 20 *et seq.* ;
 Winston Churchill on, 21 ; diffi-
 culties for Czecho-Slovakia after,
 21 ; opposition to, 23 ; and France,
 24 ; and Sudeten Germans, 26 *et*
seq. ; Mr Chamberlain on, 69 ;
 Sudeten German propaganda and,
 74, 75 ; effect on Yugoslavia, 227
 Arms-smuggling, 102-103
 Asch, 29, 91, 188, 215, 240 ; and F.S.
 men, 103 ; rioting at, 179
 Ashton-Gwatkin, Frank, 142, 149,
 152, 165, 167, 188
 Attlee, Right Hon. Richard, 15
 Attolico, Signor, 236
 Atús Union, protest against F.S.
 methods by, 100
 Auslands-Institut, 110, 111
 Austerlitz (Slavkov), 223
 Austria, and Palacký, 11 ; popula-
 tion of, 16 ; *Anschluss*, 20 *et seq.* ;
 Germany and, 21, 23, 24 ; Czecho-
 Slovakia's frontiers with, 21, 222 ;
 internal divisions of, 41 ; troop
 movements in, 57, 59 ; Dr
 Goebbels and, 118 ; foreign loans
 of, 121 ; and League of Nations,
 200 ; census figures of, 235
 Austro-Hungarian Empire, and
 Czecho-Slovakia, 13 ; landowners
 under, 147 ; and Teschen, 244 ;
 Slovaks under, 273 ; and Czechs,
 300
 Axis, Rome-Berlin, 42, 50, 255

 BAD KÖNIGSWART, 89
 Balaton, Lake, 225
 Banske, Professor Ewald, cited, 20
 Barthou, Louis, 27
 Bautzen, 58
 Bechyně, Rudolf, 190
 Beck, Colonel Josef, 211, 247
 Belgium, 16 ; neutrality of, 27
 Belgrade, 226, 227
 Beneš, President E., 314, 318, 319 ;
 and the *Anschluss*, 23 ; declares
 amnesty, 33 ; attacks on, 47, 49,
 65 ; and Czecho-Slovak army,
 123 ; receives British Minister,
 134, 201 *et seq.*, 229 ; and Henlein,
 146 ; receives Lord Runciman,
 146, 168 ; and Germany, 159 ;
 negotiates with S.d.P., 166 ; and
 Anglo-French Plan, 198, 201, 203,
 204 ; and General Syrový, 209,
 216 ; broadcast speech, September
 1938, 176-177 ; and Poland, 212 ;
 speech on 22/9/38, 212 ; and
 Hitler, 225 ; resigns Presidency,
 287 ; leaves Czecho-Slovakia, 288 ;
 issues declaration in Chicago, 319
 Bensen, 99, 105
 Beran, Rudolf, 266, 302, 311, 318 ;
 speech on policy, 261-262 ; bio-
 graphy of, 290-291 ; negotiates with
 Slovaks, 306-307 ; resists Germany,
 308
 Berchtesgaden, 27 ; Mr Chamberlain
 at, 189 *et seq.*
 Bergamo, 228
 Berlin Commission, 234
Berliner Tageblatt, cited, 57, 80
 Berlin Stock Exchange, 122
 Bilina, 101 *n.*
 Black Sea, 18
 Blum, Léon, 24
 Bodenbach, 175
 Bohemia, 38, 146, 147, 306, 311
Bohemia, newspaper, 267
 Böhmerwald, 82
 Böhmisches-Kamnitz, 148
 Böhmisches-Leipa, 48, 95, 177
 Bohumin, 245
 Bolshevism, in German propaganda,
 77
 Boncour, Paul, 24
 Bonnet, G., 52, 61, 133

- Börsen-Zeitung*, cited, 69, 77, 80
 Brandner, Willi, 98
Branná Politika, cited, 119
 Bratislava, 138, 248, 273, 302-303, 307, 308, 310, 313
 Braunau, 194
Brennpunkt Böhmen, cited, 24
 Brescia, 228
 Breslau, 78
 Britain, at Munich, 14 *et seq.*; and German colonial claims, 17; and Czecho-Slovakia's defences, 20, 22; relations with Czecho-Slovakia of, 25, 35, 42, 52 *et seq.*, 73, 116, 141 *et seq.*, 164 *et seq.*, 196-197; and German-Czecho-Slovak relations, 42, 53 *et seq.*, 103, 131 *et seq.*, 165, 189 *et seq.*; and France, 52-53; and anti-Comintern, 71; and May 21 crisis, 56 *et seq.*; and S.d.P. propaganda, 51, 73; and Bolshevism, 103, 157; Japan's hostility to, 116-117; at International Commission, 234
 British Intelligence Service, 22, 58, 254
 Brno (Brünn), 101, 138, 222, 310, 311, 314
 Brody, M., Ruthenian Premier, 247, 255
 Brück, 101 *n.*, 152
 Budapest, 224-225; radio propaganda from, 249
 Bulgaria, 227
 CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS, 275
 Carpatho-Ukraine, 274 *et seq.*, 303, 305
 Čech Square, Prague, 48
 Censorship, newspaper, 32, 200; post-office, 253
 Central Europe, 17, 18, 20; Italy and, 50; British interest in, 70; during September crisis, 224 *et seq.*; after Munich, 301-302
 Černin Palace, 53, 190, 198
 Černý, Dr J., 55, 56
České Slovo, cited, 126, 146, 236
 Český Krumlov, 238
 Četeka, news agency, 135
 Chamberlain, Right Hon. Neville, 14, 15, 117 *n.*, 133 *et seq.*, 190, 234; results of peace of, 17; speech on 24/3/38, 25; on defence of democracy, 26; and French Ministers, 53; letter to Hitler 27/9/38, 68, 236; on Austria, 69; statement on 1/11/38, 70; at Berchtesgaden, 189 *et seq.*; statement on 28/9/38, 191; on May 21 crisis, 71; statement on ultimatum to President Beneš, 202; defends Munich, 233
 Chemnitz, 120
 Chodau, 99
 Chrometz, Franz, 86
 Churchill, Right Hon. Winston S., on effects of *Anschluss*, 21; meets Henlein, 51
 Chust, 275 *et seq.*
 Chvalkovský, Dr F., 265, 313, 314; biography of, 291-292; in Berlin on 22/1/39, 297, 298; warns Czechs, 302; meets Hitler, 313
 Ciano, Count Galeazzo, 228, 255; goes to Warsaw, 303
 Clam-Gallas, Elconore, Countess, 146, 147
 Clary-Aldringen, Count, 165
 Clerical Party, Czech, 158, 263
 Commission, International, 233 *et seq.*, 238
 Communists in Czecho-Slovakia, newspaper confiscated, 32; deputies, 75; candidates, 95; attack on newspaper office of, 99; leaflets, 115; party prohibited, 159; alleged plot, 162-163; banned in Slovakia, 271
 C.P.O., Czecho-Slovak air-raid precautions organization, 204
 Csáky, Count, 247
 Czech, Dr Ludwig, 28
 Czechs, characteristics of, 12, 176, 232, 263, 318; killed in S.d.P. *putsch*, 182
 Czecho-Slovakia, betrayal of, 11; mediaeval and modern in, 12; and Munich, 14, 229 *et seq.*; and balance of power, 15; losses to Germany of, 16; army of, 17; treaties with France and U.S.S.R., 17, 35, 156 *et seq.*; unique position of, 18; and *Anschluss*, 20 *et seq.*; defences of, 21 *et seq.*, 240-241; and German army, 23; and Mr Chamberlain's speech of 24/3/38, 25; S.d.P. demand for neutrality of, 27; and Sudeten Germans after *Anschluss*, 27; attacked by Henlein,

INDEX

- 34 ; alleged Slavonic task of, 34 ; and Peace Conference, 35 ; as barrier to German expansion, 35 ; turning-point in foreign relations of, 42 ; National Council of, 43 ; subversive leaflets against, 47-49 ; and British interest, 53 ; partial mobilization in, 21/5/36, 59 *et seq.* ; Mr Chamberlain on, 71 ; economic crisis in, 74 ; alleged Bolshevism in, 77 ; and Franco-British policy, 133 ; and Lord Runciman, 136, 141 *et seq.* ; land reform in, 147 ; as authoritarian state, 158 ; and Berchtesgaden meeting, 190 ; Anglo-French surrender of, 196 *et seq.* ; under mobilization, 216 *et seq.* ; Yugoslav sympathy for, 226 ; territorial losses to Germany, 239 ; population lost to Germany, 239 ; losses to Poland, 245 ; losses to Hungary, 255 ; constitutional changes of, 256 *et seq.* ; economic position of, 294-296 ; resists Germany, 299 ; Germany seizes, 301 *et seq.* ; Provisional Government of, 319
- Czernin, Count, 178
Czernowitz, 283
- Daily Herald*, 144, 253, 312
Daladier, Edouard, 17, 52, 53, 61, 218
Dalton, H., 117 n.
Danube, river, 223, 225
Dérer, Dr Ivan, 208
Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, cited, 67, 80
Deutsche Diplomatisch-politische Korrespondenz, 135, 140
Deutsche Turn- und Sportgemeinde, Henleinist organization, letter sent by, 89-90
Deutsche Turnverband (German Gymnastic Association), 98
Deutsche Wehr, 122
Deutscher Handlungsgehilfenverband (Union of Commercial Employees), 91
Deutsches Haus, Prague, 46, 106
Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro, news agency, 62, 173
Deutschlandsender, wireless station, 78
Dietrich, Dr, 316
Dilo, organ of U.N.D.O., 283
- Dirksen, Dr Herbert von, 133-134
Dovhé, 285
Drang nach Osten, 34, 35, 124, 287
Dresden, 120, 121
Durčanský, Dr, 308, 309, 312
- EGER, 29, 62, 100, 103, 168, 179, 181 ; scenes in, after *putsch*, 184 *et seq.*
Egypt, Italian threat to, 117
Eichwald, 87
Eisgrub, 47
Elbogen, 181
Essen, 12, 71
Esti Ujsag, 77
Expres, 316
- FALKENAU, 181, 185
Feigl, Richard, 48
Fischern, 90, 175
Fourth Plan, 155-156, 168 *et seq.*
Four Power Group, 232
Four Year Plan, 121
France, at Munich, 14 *et seq.* ; alliances of, 17, 130, 157 ; and Czecho-Slovakia, 35, 42, 54, 133 ; and Italy, 50-51, 297 ; in May 21 crisis, 60 *et seq.* ; and British Royal visit, 131 ; betrayal by, 196 *et seq.* ; at International Commission, 234
François-Poncet, M., 60
Frank, Karl, 56, 62, 79, 152, 163, 185, 187, 188
Frank, Ludwig, 194
Frankfurter Zeitung, cited, 25, 27, 121
Freikorps (Free Corps), Sudeten German Organization, 185, 215
Freiwaldau, 47, 102, 175
Freiwilliger Schutzdienst (Voluntary Defence Service), 56, 97, 98 *et seq.* ; instructions of (document), 107 ; demonstrate in Bratislava and Brno, 310
Friedberg, 175
Friedensdorf, 177
Frýdek, 245
Frýstat, 245
- GABLONZ, 94, 95, 175
Genoa, 50
German Christian Socialists, 28
German Dye Trust, 83
German Farmers Party, 28, 125
German Small Traders Party, 28
German Social Democrats, 28, 29, 55-242

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

- Germany, gains at Munich, 16-17 ; reputed planning to attack Czecho-Slovakia, 57 *et seq.* ; and Austria, 69 ; position in Central Europe, 70 ; war preparations in, 118 ; and Hungary, 225 ; and Yugo-Slavia, 227 ; occupies Sudetenland, 233-234 ; and Poland, 245 ; and Jews, in Central Europe, 298 ; demands from Czecho-Slovakia, 298
- Gestapo, secret police, 26, 106, 239, 242, 302, 317
- Godesberg, 116, 211-216, 234, 236, 239
- Goebbels, Dr Josef, 50, 74 ; attacks Czecho-Slovakia, 77, 80, 83 ; on Sudeten Germans, 118
- Goering, Field-Marshal Hermann, 24, 71, 119, 174 ; insults Czechs, 176
- Graslitz (Kraslice), 84, 85, 109, 182
- Gross-Kunzendorf, 47
- HABERSPIRK, 181
- Hácha, President Emil, 265, 308, 312 ; biography of, 288-290 ; at Berlin, 313, 314
- Hagenwald, 120
- Halbhuber, Franz, 48
- Halifax, Lord, 131, 167 ; sees Captain Wiedemann, 132 ; in Paris, 133
- Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, cited, 27, 125, 174
- Haselbach, 180
- Hašek, Stefan, 274
- Hejas, Lieutenant-Colonel Istvan, 252
- Henderson, Ian, 143, 188
- Henderson, Sir Neville, 53, 54, 58, 60, 63
- Henlein, Konrad, 26 ; demands elections, 29 ; makes Karlsbad speech, 33 *et seq.* ; on National-Socialism, 38 ; speaks at Reichenberg, 44 ; and British politicians, 51-52, 124 ; goes to Munich, 52 ; sees Hodža, 62 ; support for, 73 ; and F.S., 101 ; finances of, 112-113 ; meets Lord Runciman, 152-153, 165 ; goes to Berchtesgaden, 166 ; tells Runciman mission their task is finished, 188 ; flees to Germany, 188, 189 ; threatens opponents, 240
- Heppner, General, 314
- Hess, Rudolf, 125, 132
- Himmeler, Heinrich, 26, 316
- Hirschenstand, 96
- Hitler, Adolf, in Vienna, 26 ; and May 21 crisis, 43, 66-67 ; goes to Rome, 49-50 ; on "eternal German patience," 64 ; denies mobilization, 65 ; orders fortifications, 66, 118 ; haste urged by, 116 ; sends "goodwill" message to London, 132 ; speech at Nurnberg, 178-179 ; meets Mr Chamberlain at Berchtesgaden, 189 *et seq.* ; enters Sudetenland, 240 ; annexes Czecho-Slovakia, 301 *et seq.* ; New York speech of, 302 ; in Czecho-Slovakia, 316, 317, 318
- Hlinka, Mgr. Andrej, 270, 271
- Hlinka Guard, 271, 273, 274, 302, 305, 307, 308, 310
- Hoare, Sir Samuel, 68
- Hodža, Dr Milan, announces Nationalities Statute, 30-31 ; attacks on, 49, 127 ; statement to Press, 58 ; receives S.d.P. leaders, 62, 127 ; and S.d.P. memorandum, 124 ; is optimistic, 126 ; talks with British Minister, 134 ; and proposal to send Lord Runciman, 135-136 ; receives letter from Kundt, 139 ; proposes Third Plan, 161 ; replies to S.d.P. ultimatum, 187-188 ; broadcast speech on 18/9/38, 192-193 ; resigns Premiership, 209
- Hoffenreich, Ludwig, 109
- Hoffman, Karl, 48
- Hohenlohe, Prince Max Egon von, 152, 153
- Hohenlohe, Princess Stefanie von, 132, 152
- Hong Kong, 117
- Hôtel Alcron, 141, 145
- Hôtel Viktoria, 183, 184
- Hôtel Welzl, 183, 184
- Hrad, castle, 11
- Hradčany, palace, 198, 220, 315, 316, 318
- Hultschin (Hlučín), 111, 175
- Hungarians, demand autonomy, 31, 201 ; at war with Czechs, 246 *et seq.* ; and *Times* leader, 171
- Hungary, 20, 211, 223, 224-226 ; and Nazi-ism, 225-226 ; demands territory, 246 *et seq.*, 303

INDEX

- Imstičov, 285
 Ingelsberg, 85
 International Commission—*see* Commission, International
 Iser Mountains, 59
 Italy, 42, 50, 117; alleged mobilization in, 228-229; intrigues in Slovakia, 303
 JÄGERNDORF, 239
 Jaksch, Wenzel, appeals to Chamber of Deputies, 55; writes to Lord Runciman, 145; appeals for Sudeten German unity, 194
 Jantsch, Josef, case of, 91 *et seq.*
 Japan, and Sudeten question, 116-117
 Jasiňa, 285
 Jechnitz, 90
 Jews, in Czecho-Slovakia, 26, 91, 93, 268, 273, 298; in Carpatho-Ukraine, 278, 280; commit suicide, 316
 Jičín, 87
 Jihlava, 310, 314
 Josefthal, 95
 KAADEN, 48, 179, 182
 Kaiserwalde, 87
 Kánya, Kálmán de, 247, 255
 Kapušany, 250
 Karlsbad, 90, 103, 109, 181, 239; S.d.P. congress at, 33; refugees from, 243
 Karlsbad Programme, 33-40, 42, 43, 45, 123, 166, 169, 170
 Karmasin, Herr, 312
 Keitel, General, 316
 Kinsky, Count Zdenko Radoslav, 146, 147
 Kinsky, Countess Eleonore, 146, 147
 Kinsky, Count Ulrich, 148
 Kisvarda, 252
 Köhler, Friedrich, 87
 Köllner, Franz, 104 *n.*, 163, 164, 172, 173
 Klosterneuburg, 57, 59
 Kolovrat Palace, 128
 Komarinskyi, Dr Volodimir, 276, 281
 Komárno (Komárom), 223, 247, 248
 Komotau, 62, 99
 Košice, 248, 255
 Koukola, 181
 Krejčí, General Ludwig, 220, 230-231
 Krnov, 238
 Krofta, Dr Kamil, 53, 54, 143; statement to *Petit Journal*, 128-129
 Krumau, 87, 175, 181
 Kult, Arthur, 87
 Kundt, Herr, 62, 139, 152, 153, 165, 170, 171-172, 193, 195
 LABOUR DAY, 43-45
 Lacroix, M. de, 53, 54, 202, 203, 204
 Landskron, 95
 Langer, Franz, 48
 League of Nations, 34, 69, 70
 Lebrun, President, 38
 Lehmann, Dr, 112
 Leibl, Anton, 109-110
 Leipzig, 45, 78
 Lidové Listy, cited, 190, 231, 236
 Lidové Noviny, cited, 127, 128, 231-232
 Lienert, Alois, 95
 Liga Českého Lva (League of the Bohemian Lion), 49
 Litvinoff, M., 27
 Ljubljana, 227
 Lloyd, George Ambrose, first Baron, on German plan, 116; on ultimatum to President Beneš, 204
 MACARTNEY, C. A., cited, 275
 Mach, Šano, 308, 312
 Machník, František, 57, 59
 Magyaróvár, 252
Magyarság, 77
 Mastný, Dr, 80, 120, 131
 Mährisch-Schönberg, 94
 Mährisch-Trubau, 86
Mannschaft im Kampf, 105
 Marienbad, 103
 "Markomannus," cited, 24
 Masaryk, Jan, 51, 319
 Masaryk, President T. G., 12, 205, 267, 287, 314
 Mautsch, Frant, 87
 May, Franz, 172-173
 Mělník, 48
 Mendelssohn, Felix, 111
 Moltke, General Helmuth von, 116
 Moravec, Colonel Emanuel, 20 *n.*; cited, 22
 Moravská Ostrava (Mährisch-Ostrau), 101, 102, 171, 172, 174; occupied by Germany, 313
 Mukačevo, 248, 255
 Munich, 'peace' of, 14, 16-17, 229, 239
 Mussolini, Benito, receives Hitler, 50; statement on mobilization, 228

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

- Nachtausgabe*, cited, 167-168
 Nagykanizsa, 227
Národní Osvobození, 267
 National Labour Party, Czech, 263, 264, 265-266
 National-Socialist Party, in Czecho-Slovakia, 38-39, 54, 158, 265, 270
 National Unity Party, Czech, 263-265, 266
National-Zeitung, cited, 71, 174
 Nationalities Statute, 30-31, 139
 Nečas, J., 264, 267
 Nettek, Karl, 86
 Neuern, 194
 Neurath, Baron von, 301
 Neuwirth, Dr, 62
 Newton, Sir Basil (formerly Mr B. C. Newton), 53, 54, 134, 135, 137, 143, 165, 198, 203, 204, 229
 Niemoeller, Pastor Martin, 37
 Nier, Max, 109, 110
 Nigrisch, 120
 Nitra, 223, 248
Nova Svoboda, 282, 293
 Nový Jičín, 239
 Nürnberg, 57, 77, 121, 165, 177, 178

 OBER-KAMNITZ, 148
 Ober-Maxdorf, 94, 100
 Olomouc, 177, 310, 314
 Olza, river, 244
 Opava—see Troppau
 Osuský, M., 24

 PALACKÝ, FRANTIŠEK, 11
 Palestine Office (in Prague), 243
 Palme, Hellmut, 48
 Parschnitz, 87
 Passau, 121
 Patscheider, Dr, 112
 Peters, Dr, 193
Petit Journal, 128
 Petlarn, 90
 Peto, Geoffrey, 143, 152, 188
 Petržalka, 239
 Pezet, M., on S.d.P. finance, 113
 Pietschmann, Franz, 87
 Pilsen, 48, 100, 120, 314
 Plauen, 120
 Plotz, Franz, 95
 Poland, 61; foreign policy of, 211; gains Teschen district, 244-246; sends terrorists to Ruthenia, 253; intrigues for annexation of Slovakia, 303
 Poles, demand autonomy, 31; and *Times* leader, 171
 Pöpperl, Josef, 89
 Postumia, 227, 228
Prager Mittag, 85
Prager Presse, 113, 205, 267
Prager Tagblatt, cited, 143, 209, 232, 286
 Prague, Labour Day in, 43; stock market, 113; foreigners in, 200; under war conditions, 218-220; author's departure from, 221; during German occupation, 314 *et seq.*
Právo Lidu, cited, 236
 Prešov, 275, 276
 Pressnitz, 181, 182
 Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, 301
 Pružinský, M., 308
 Pürstein, 179

 QUEBEC, 38

 RAKOVNIK, 48
 Reichenberg, 29, 48, 59, 91, 112, 125; Henlein at, 44 *et seq.*
 Revay, Julian, 282, 286, 293
 Rhineland, fortification of, 66
 Ribbentrop, Herr von, 50, 171, 316; and Sir Neville Henderson, 54, 60, 61; and May 21 crisis, 63, 65; interviews Dr Chvalkovský, 297 *et seq.*; in Prague, 316
 Ripka, Hubert, cited, 23
 Ritter, Herr, 193
 Robětín, Dr K., writes to Lord Runciman, 148
 Romhány, 252
Rote Fahne, cited, 157, 267
 Rothenhaus Castle, 152, 153
 Rotter, Franz, 96
Rudé Právo, is confiscated, 32; suppressed, 267
 Rumania, 221, 275, 280, 303
 Rumburg, 103, 177, 239
 Runciman, Lord, 122; decision to send to Prague, 135; mission welcomed by S.d.P., 137; reputedly coming as private individual, 137; and Czecho-Slovak negotiations with S.d.P., 138; at Hôtel Alcron, 141; gives Press

INDEX

- reception, 143-145; and *Daily Herald*, 144; and German Social Democrats, 145; makes bad impression, 146; visits Austrian nobility, 146 *et seq.*; is subjected to S.d.P. propaganda (document), 149-150; meets Henlein, 152-153; public idea of, 154; opinion of Fourth Plan, 155, 169; and Czech-Soviet Pact, 156-157; aims of his mission, 160; asks Henlein to go to Hitler, 166; addresses Henleinists, 178
- Rundschau*, *Die*, cited, 98, 139
- Rutha, Heinrich, 79, 80
- Ruthenia, 226; and Polish-Hungarian common frontier, 247, 249, 255; Hungarian terrorists in, 250 *et seq.*; fighting in, 253-254; autonomy of, 256, 260; becomes Carpatho-Ukraine, 274
- SAAZ, 49
- St Vitus cathedral, 11, 220
- St Wenceslas, 12, 220
- Schmiedeberg, 96
- Schneeweiss, Alfred, 86
- Schönborn, 147
- Schönpriesen, 179
- Schuschnigg, Dr Kurt von, 37, 313
- Schwaderbach, 182
- Schwarzenberg, 147
- Sebekowsky, Dr, 40
- Seidel, Johann, 87
- Seidenberg, 120
- Severočeský Živnostník a Obchodník*, 48
- Sevljuš, 248
- Sič, Ukrainian Storm Troops, 276 *et seq.*, 283
- Sidor, Karol, 274, 303, 308-309
- Simon, Sir John, 164
- Sinclair, Sir Archibald, 51
- Sivák, Josef, 308
- Slanky, 250
- Slovakia, 219; Hungarian attacks in, 248; negotiations with Hungary, 247 *et seq.*, 303; autonomy of, 257 *et seq.*; trouble in, 302 *et seq.*; deficit of, 305; German intervention in, 310-313
- Slovaks, characteristics of, 269; and Prague Government, 304 *et seq.*
- Smutný, M., 143
- Social Democratic Party, Czech, 55, 158
- Sokol, Dr Martin, 271, 308
- Sokol organization, 128; in Yugoslavia, 226
- Sozialdemokrat*, *Der*, 267
- Spina, Dr Franz, 28
- Stanhope, James Richard, seventh Earl, 202
- Stěchovice, 243
- Steed, Wickham, 235
- Sternberg, 147
- Stopford, R. J., 142, 143, 167, 215
- Sudetendeutschen Heimatbund, (Homeland League of Sudeten Germans), 110
- Sudeten German party, encouraged by *Anschluss*, 26 *et seq.*; and Social Democrats, 29; impossibility of satisfying, 39-40; instructions from Berlin, 41; typical demonstration of, 44; leaflet campaign, 47-49; at 1935 elections, 74; supported by employers, 86; illegal arsenals of, 102, 103; opinion of British policy, 103; number of members, 104 and *n.*; instructions of (documents) 108, 109; memorandum to Government, 123 *et seq.*; voting support, 125; and Runciman mission, 148-150; refuse concessions, 153-154; incite to violence, 163, 164; end of *putsch*, 186
- Sudeten-Strasse*, roadway, 120
- Switzerland, neutrality of, 27
- Syrový, General Jan, 206, 307; broadcasts appeal, 208; becomes Prime Minister, 208; and politics, 209-210, 215; announces surrender, 229-230; suppresses Slovak separatists, 307
- TACHAU, 94, 96
- Tačovo, 250
- Teleki, Count, 247
- Teplanský, M., 307, 308
- Teplitz-Schönau, 79
- Teschen, 244, 245, 246
- Third Plan, 160 *et seq.*
- Times*, *The*, 68, 172, 174; cited, 133, 134-135, 170-171
- Tisa, river, 250, 280
- Tiso, Mgr. Josef, 247; becomes Slovak Premier, 270; biography of, 292-293; attempts *putsch*, 307; sees Hitler, 312
- Tokyo, 116, 117, 291, 292
- Trautenuau, 48

EYEWITNESS IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

- Trhové Sviny, 288
 Triebitz, 95
 Trieste, 227, 228
 Troppau (Opava), 45, 48, 111, 112, 177
 Tuka, Professor, 308
- UHERSKÝ BROD, 223
 Ukrainians, 274 *et seq.* ; problem of, 275 ; imitate Nazis, 281, 282 ; in U.S.A., 286
Umgangssprache, 235
 U.N.D.O., Ukrainian Party in Poland, 283
 U.N.O., Ukrainian National Union Party, 277, 281, 282
 U.S.A., 61, 129, 286, 319
 U.S.S.R., 189, 283-284 ; isolated from West, 17 ; alliance with Czechoslovakia, 24, 35, 157, 159, 299
 Užhorod, 248, 250, 255
- VANČO, M., 308
 Vansittart, Sir Robert, 51
 Varaždin, 227
 Velké Meziříčí, 222
Venkov, 266 ; cited, 127, 288
 Verein (Volksbund) für das Deutschtum im Auslande (Alliance for Germany Abroad), 110, 112
 Versailles, Treaty of, 12, 14, 31
 Verona, 228
 Vicenza, 228
 Vienna, 20, 21, 26, 235 ; conference at, 255
 Viererbl, Dr Karl, 80
Völkischer Beobachter, 285 ; cited, 61, 67, 77, 78, 80, 174
- Volksblatt*, cited, 84
 Vološin, Mgr. Augustyn, biography of, 293-294
 Voron, Andrej, 277, 281
- WAGNER, HANS, 109
 Wagner, Richard, music of, 111
 Warnsdorf, 93, 103, 179
 Warsaw, 247
 Weidenau, 175
 Weigel, Bruno, 78
 Weissbach, 94
 Weizsacker, Baron von, 234, 235
 Welles, Mr Sumner, cited, 301
Weltanschauung, 37
 Wenceslas Square, Prague, 12, 141, 178, 205, 217, 229, 314, 315
 Wernersreuth, 94
Westböhmsche Rote Fahne, 99
 'Whisper propaganda,' 82 *et seq.*
 Wiedemann, Captain Fritz, 131-133, 135
 Wilson, Sir Horace, 116
 Wiskemann, Elizabeth, cited, 18, 112, 147
Woche, Die, 109, 110
 Wollner, Herr, 99
 Wunder, Kurt, 87
- YUGOSLAVIA, 224, 226-228, 303
- ZAGREB, 226, 227
 Zájíček, Dr Erwin, 28
 Zd'ar Castle, 146, 147
Zeit, Die, 32, 62, 75, 186
 Zenkl, Dr, 208
 Žižka, Jan, 214
 Znojmo, 238
 Zwickau, 99, 100